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Finnish secondary school students' experiences of informal English learning

Exploring the acquisition of English from video games and other extracurricular activities

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| <p>Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract</p> <p>Tämä tutkielma käsittelee suomalaisten lukio-oppilaiden kokemuksia informaalista englanninoppimisesta. Tutkielman tarkoituksena on kartoittaa, miten nuoret oppivat englantia vapaa-ajan aktiviteeteissa ja minkä kielitaidon osa-alueiden he kokevat kehittyneen. Aktiviteeteista keskityn analysoimaan erityisesti videopeljä. Tutkielmassa pohditaan myös, mitä pedagogisia seurauksia tuloksilla voisi olla.</p> <p>Tutkielman teoreettisena viitekehyksenä toimivat informaalin oppimisen ja vieraan kielen oppimisen (SLA) tieteenalojen tutkimukset. Erityisesti esittelen aiempaa tutkimusta videopelien vaikutuksesta kielenoppimiseen.</p> <p>Tutkielmassa käytetty aineisto koostuu kyselylomakkeella kerätyistä vastauksista ja puolistrukturoiduista haastatteluista. Kyselyn osallistujat ovat suomalaisia lukio-opiskelijoita eteläsuomalaisesta lukiosta. Kaiken kaikkiaan sain yhteensä 117 vastausta kyselyyni. Kyselyn vastausten perusteella haastateltavaksi valikoitui kolme vapaaehtoista opiskelijaa. Haastatteluiden yhteenlaskettu kesto on noin 95 minuuttia.</p> <p>Aineiston analyysissä on käytetty pääosin laadullisia sisällönanalyysin menetelmiä. Olen sen lisäksi täydentänyt analyysiä kyselyaineiston pohjalta laadituilla kvantitatiivisilla laskelmilla. Haastatteluiden analyysi nojaa kerronnallisen teemahaastattelun periaatteisiin.</p> <p>Tutkimusaineiston perusteella lukio-opiskelijat käyttävät englantia paljon vapaa-ajallaan. He kokevat oppineensa erityisesti sanastoa koulun ulkopuolisista aktiviteeteista. Haastatteluun osallistuneet opiskelijat kokevat oppineensa jopa enemmän englantia koulun ulkopuolella kuin koulussa. He nostavat esiin sanaston laajenemisen lisäksi kuullun- ja luetun ymmärtämistaitojen, puhetaitojen ja vuorovaikutustaitojen kehittymisen. Tutkimuksen osallistujat kokevat tv-sarjojen ja elokuvien katsomisen ilman tekstityksiä ja englannin käytön tosielämän keskusteluissa hyödyllisimmiksi vapaa-ajan aktiviteeteiksi kielitaidon kehittymisen kannalta. Aktiivisesta englannin käytöstä vapaa-ajalla ylipäättään seuraa luonnollisesti paljon oppimista.</p> | | | |
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| Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information | | | |

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Abbreviations

| | |
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| SLA | Second language acquisition |
| ESL | English as a second language |
| L2 | Second language |
| EFL | English as a foreign language |
| EE | Extramural English |

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1 Introduction

English is ever-present in our everyday lives in Finland. It is more of a rule than exception for many Finns that much of their English learning happens as much in informal settings as in classrooms. According to Leppänen et al. (2011), “English is the most widely studied language and the foreign language most commonly used. Finns also assess their own skills in English as relatively good.” (Leppänen et al. 2011). Furthermore, Finns recognise the value of good English competence in terms of globalisation. (Leppänen et al. 2011) In fact, Finnish people’s good English proficiency is also recognised globally (EF 2016). The credit for our good English competence has traditionally gone to the good quality of Finnish education – every Finnish child learns English at school, usually from the 3rd grade of primary school onwards. However, we seem to start noticing the effects of other factors increasingly as well, specifically, acquisition of English from informal settings. Opportunities for informal learning of English in Finland are plentiful.

English is the main language of entertainment and global media, which means that a great deal of music, movies, television programmes, social media, and news are available for Finnish people in English. Since there is no tradition of dubbing TV and movies in Finland, most Finnish people are exposed to English input from a very young age. Furthermore, practically everyone can easily access internet these days, and with the prevalence of smartphones, English media are at the reach of our hands wherever we go. Such exposure to English, both receptive and productive, inevitably results in informal language acquisition. That is to say, learning happens even when learning something is not the purpose of the activity (e.g. reading a book, playing a game or watching a movie). With the development and emergence of electronic devices, a large variety additional avenues comes available for informal English learning. One such avenue is playing video

games. In this thesis, I use the term extramural English (EE), coined by Sundqvist (2009a), to talk about “English that learners come in contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom” (Sundqvist 2009a, p. 24). Within my use of the term, I also include instances of English use, which happen inside school grounds but outside formal instruction, for example, playing a mobile game in recess. Playing video games differs from many other EE activities, in that they often provide better chances for productive language use, resulting in more learning than in cases of receptive language use. Sundqvist confirms productive activities (gaming, internet, reading) to be superior to receptive ones, such as listening to music, watching television or reading a newspaper (Sundqvist 2009a). In addition to textual and audio input, video games require the player to make choices regarding the language, or even contribute written or oral output. Increasing availability of online access and playing video games also combine to form multiplayer situations, in which players use a mutual language (usually English) to communicate with each other during a game in order to overcome obstacles presented by the game, or just for a social experience.

Getting acquainted with research on informal English learning and video games sparked my own interest in writing my thesis on the topic. I have always given much credit of the development of my English skills to the informal learning that resulted from playing video games in English in my teens. Especially playing World of Warcraft (a massively-multiplayer-online-role-playing-game, MMORPG) and online strategy and adventure games has contributed to my acquiring English enormously. Study by da Silva (2014) confirms MMORPGs as a good way to learn L2 and even suggests that games should be widely used in language classrooms in the future. I do not quite believe in that, but I do feel that all areas of my English proficiency improved a lot due to constant interactional

use of English. Much of the content of the games I played is textual (and audio), since stories are a crucial part of them. Even more importantly, I always actively communicated with other players. Often, the communication was spoken and happened using Skype or another team speak software, in addition to frequent interaction via written chat and game-related discussion forums. Therefore, I was able to engage in conversation with many native speakers of English (mainly British) and other non-native users. To this day, I feel these conversations are to thank for my oral proficiency and conversational skills in. Most importantly, I became comfortable using English and am not afraid of making mistakes. Additionally, many of my friends have similar experiences. They, like me, credit their English proficiency more to EE use than their schooling.

On the other hand, even though Finnish people generally have good grasp of English (see Leppänen et al. 2011), in my experience, many non-native speakers are uncomfortable with actually using the language and are afraid of making mistakes, despite possessing relatively good English competence. I have often heard people say that they understand English well but are still hesitant to speak. Even as I have no proof to back this claim, I feel that this is a pedagogical issue, which might have roots in how classroom teaching is constructed. As a future English teacher, I thus find it vital to try to understand where the insecurity to use English stems from and endeavour to encourage EFL (English as a foreign language) learners not to be afraid of making mistakes. This is why I want to explore the opinions and experiences of the informants of this thesis on this topic as well.

Further review of earlier literature on the topic endorses the usefulness of playing video games and engaging in extramural activities for language learning (see for example Pearson 2004; Prensky 2007; Sockett 2014; Sundqvist 2009a; Sundqvist 2009b; Sylvén 2004; Sylvén & Sundqvist 2012). In addition to establishing a strong link between using

English outside-of-class and gained English competence, little focus has been given on the learners' attitudes towards the English language. Furthermore, there is not much research done on the attitudes of the learners in the Finnish context, apart from Master's theses by Kirppu (2014) and Vidgren (2014). Whereas Kirppu explores upper secondary school students' experiences of informal English learning from video games, I wish to include other EE activities along with video gaming in my examination of the phenomenon. Moreover, I wish to see how the students feel about the differences of extramural English and school English, which is what Vidgren mainly focused on in her thesis. In other words, my aim is to build on the knowledge gained from these two fine studies and gain further insight on the phenomenon of informal English learning in Finland.

All that being said, the aim of this study is to shed further light on the informal learning of English through various EE activities by exploring the experiences of upper secondary school students. More specifically, I look at what language skills they feel have developed and how they have developed from informal settings. Furthermore, I am interested in what the students feel are most useful ways of learning English outside school. Additionally, I wish to find out how the students feel about English as a language – its usefulness and their motivation to learn it. To answer my research questions (expressed in detail in chapter 3.1), I collected data via a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews with volunteer participants.

I start my thesis with an overview of the most relevant theories for this study. I then move on to explain the research methodologies applied in this study and the procedures that were used for data gathering. I then provide my analysis of the data and the findings

resulting thereof, before drawing relevant conclusions. I end this thesis with a discussion of the limitations of the study and the its possible implications.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical framework for this study. Starting with introducing the fields of second language acquisition (SLA) and informal learning, I subsequently present relevant previous studies dealing with informal English learning, especially in the Finnish context.

2.1 Second language acquisition

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a broadly studied field of Applied Linguistics. This is the umbrella term for all studies about EFL learning from a pedagogical point of view, and thus the backbone of the theoretical framework of my study. A pioneer of SLA, Rod Ellis, provides a great overview of the development of the field (Ellis 2010): According to him, studying SLA stems from the need of teachers who became researchers to understand how a language subsequent to the mother tongue is learned, a ‘second language’, in order to increase the quality of second language teaching. Therefore, SLA has always had a strong link with language pedagogy (Ellis 2010, p. 183).

SLA and ESL (English as a second language) can be considered problematic terms, as they imply the target language of learning to be a person’s *second* language (L2) only preceded by his mother tongue. To avoid misunderstandings, in this thesis, when I use the terms SLA and L2, I apply Ellis’s (1997) definition of second language:

‘second’ can refer to any language that is learned subsequent to the mother tongue. Thus, it can refer to the learning of a third or fourth language. Also, ‘second’ is not intended to

contrast with 'foreign'. Whether you are learning a language naturally as a result of living in a country where it is spoken, or learning it in a classroom through instruction, it is customary to speak generically of 'second' language acquisition. (Ellis 1997, p. 3)

Therefore, second language in the context of this thesis refers to English learned as a subsequent language to one's mother tongue no matter how many other languages they know before. In addition, when I speak of SLA, *acquisition* stands to encompass both conscious learning and incidental learning. This definition suits the context of my study perfectly and that of today's Finland, where English is mainly learned at school, but even more and more of it happens naturally in informal settings as well. For the reasons given by Ellis above, I also prefer to use the term ESL or L2 when talking about acquiring the language in favour of EFL in this thesis. However, as is the convention, I too speak of EFL classrooms when formal language instruction is the case.

Even though SLA research has a long tradition, it does have its problems. As Ellis (2010) creditably presents, many scholars agree on the existence of a gap between theory and practice – it is hard to apply findings of research in the language classroom. (Ellis 2010, pp. 184–185) (For varying examples see e.g. Brumfit 1983; Byrnes 2000; Freeman & Johnson 1998; Hirst 1966; Stenhouse 1975) “This core distinction [theory/practice] is, of course, reflected in L2 (second language) acquisition itself – in the difference between explicit knowledge/learning and implicit knowledge/learning of a second language (Ellis 2009)” (Ellis 2010, p. 184). It is notable that in many cases, findings of a study may have no relevant implications to second language teaching practices, as Ellis suggests (2010, p. 186). Consequently, Ellis calls out teachers to research their own classrooms in order

for SLA research to serve its purpose properly – to help teachers in their line of work and develop the teaching of second languages. This is also what the current language teacher training in Finland strongly emphasises, highlighting the vital importance of research from teachers for teachers. After all, the aim of SLA research is to improve existing teaching practices and increase our understanding of how languages are acquired.

2.1.1 The interaction hypothesis

The most relevant theory of SLA for this thesis is “the interaction hypothesis”, as it explains how informal learning of languages work. Ellis provides the reader with a thorough overview of the interaction hypothesis in his critique on the very same theory. (Ellis 1991) The interaction hypothesis is based on Stephen Krashen’s work (see Krashen 1980) and his “input hypothesis”, which determines that “the subconscious process of 'acquisition' (as opposed to the conscious process of 'learning') occurs when the learner is focussed on meaning and obtains comprehensible input.” (Ellis 1991, p. 4) Whereas Krashen’s model ignored the importance of language output, *interaction* hypothesis by Michael Long (see Gass 2003) does not. Comprehensible input, nonetheless, is accepted as necessary for SLA by both researchers. Long also found that tasks requiring information change (i.e. negotiating meaning) by the participants lead to more SLA than tasks without. Therefore, acquisition of L2 is at its peak when the interaction requires output from the participant as well, according to the interaction hypothesis. (Ellis 1991, pp. 4–7) While Ellis is being highly critical of the interaction hypothesis, and challenges the necessity of input in L2 acquisition, because Krashen’s input hypothesis cannot be proven (Ellis 1991, p. 11–12), there is certainly no harm to a person’s L2 acquisition if they get comprehensible input of the target language. There is also no denying the

influence of both the input hypothesis and the interaction hypothesis, that complements the former, have had on language pedagogy.

The interaction hypothesis has been widely applied by language teachers, in order to create tasks for learners in which they would be negotiating meaning. However, the interaction hypothesis has implications for informal learning as well, as the interaction does not need to happen in a formal teaching setting. Such situation, for instance, would be two players looking to overcome opponents in a video game by exchanging information about the events in the game.

2.2 Informal learning

Informal learning is learning that happens when working, being with one's family or during pastime activities – in people's everyday life. Informal learning can be intentional, but it is usually random and unintentional. (Nyyssönen 2002, p. 9) It has been a long established fact that plenty of language learning happens in informal settings, outside of schools and classrooms. This is particularly true of English, as it is the dominant language in business and media worldwide. English is everywhere. Dealing with, seeing, hearing, and speaking L2 for other than learning purposes, in one's spare time, help in acquiring L2 even without conscious effort to learn.

The importance and potential of informal learning have also been noticed in the EU and the OECD. Consequently, the validation of English proficiency gained from informal learning has been on the agenda in Finland from the early 2000s. In fact, Finland is at the forefront of this movement. (Nyyssönen 2002, pp. 10–11)

2.2.1 Extramural English

Especially vocabulary and oral proficiency of the L2 learners develop by engaging in out-of-class activities, that Sundqvist in case of English refers to as ‘Extramural English (EE) activities’ (reading, watching TV, surfing the internet, listening to music, playing video games) (Sundqvist 2009a, 25–26). She noticed a strong positive correlation between time spent on EE activities and the learners’ oral proficiency and vocabulary (Sundqvist 2009a, pp. 144–146, 163–164). Furthermore, the type of the activity matters too, as activities that require productivity from the learner (video games, reading, internet) have a greater impact than ‘passive’ activities (Sundqvist 2009a, pp. 203–204).

2.2.2 Video games and English learning

In the context of this study, video games are considered any games that happen on a screen of some sort (television, computer, laptop, tablet, portable game console, phone...) with moving images and require some kind of interaction with the game from the player. This definition of video games is used throughout the thesis. Given that informal learning connected to video games has already been recognised as an effective source of L2 acquisition nearly two decades ago, recent research on the topic is surprisingly hard to come by.

Prensky writes, “Kids like all humans love to learn when it isn’t forced upon them. Modern computer and video games provide learning opportunities every second, or fraction thereof.” (Prensky 2003, p. 2) Already in 2003, Prensky highlighted the vast potential of learning language by playing video games. In fact, playing video games might be the most engaging EE activity, because games often require a lot of productive use of English from the learner.

When considering research conducted on the connection between playing video games and second language acquisition, Pia Sundqvist is one of the most accomplished researchers of recent years. In a similar fashion to Prensky, Sundqvist found that especially games, in which the learner has to produce language to communicate actively with other players or the game's mechanics, are useful for L2 acquisition (Sundqvist 2009a). In addition to learning vocabulary, which is already recognised as an evident result of playing video games, Sundqvist also examines the oral proficiency of her subjects. She highlights precisely the importance of productive activities (video games, reading, browsing the internet) that force the learners to rely on their language skills and use English productively. They turn out to be more useful than passive activities in terms of the development of oral proficiency and vocabularies (Sundqvist, 2009a) of the participants. This prompted Sundqvist to study the effect of playing video games on ESL learning more closely. With Sylvén, she provides evidence that certain video games, in which the learner is under constant input of the L2 and is required to interact with other players using the L2, especially MMORPGs, are “conductive” to L2 learning and that “L2 English proficiency correlates with the frequency of gaming and types of games played” (Sylvén & Sundqvist 2010, p. 302). Sylvén (2004) had also previously found a correlation between high proficiency in vocabulary tests and the amount of English media input. In her study, boys received more extramural English input than girls in general and did better in vocabulary tests. Further analysis proved that playing video games was an important factor in terms of the boys' vocabulary competence. (Sylvén 2004, p. 226) In addition to being an informal learning avenue, video games (alternate reality games), can also be used as a motivational tool for second language learning and in helping develop co-operational skills (Connolly, Stansfield & Hailey 2011).

2.2.3 Research in the Finnish context

In the Finnish context, there is still a void to be filled. As of yet, only little research on the connection of extramural English activities and language acquisition has been conducted. Most notable existing studies include that of Piirainen-Marsh and Tainio (2009). They studied how collaborative gameplay offers possibilities for additional language (English) learning. They studied two 13-year-old Finnish boys playing Final Fantasy, and the way in which the players react and adapt to the input from the game and make it a part of their social gaming experience. They found that playing games such as Final Fantasy X allow players to constantly “attend to and draw upon the language of the game as a key resource for attending to and interpreting scenes and events in the game world and building social play” (Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio 2009, p. 179). In other words, the “players pay detailed attention to the textual and vocal resources afforded by the game, ... adopt gaming vocabulary as part of their interactional repertoire, memorize chunks of game dialogue, and reproduce or adapt these resources in appropriate contexts in order to engage with the narrative” (Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio 2009, p. 180) and each other. This means that the players resort to code switching in their interaction, since the majority of their talk is in Finnish, but it is constantly complemented with English drawn from the game. The researchers also speculate that greater experience in gaming increases the players’ repertoire of not only specific game-based vocabulary, but it also extends to other communities that revolve around video games (Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio 2009, p. 179). Furthermore, repeating utterances heard in the game help L2 learners to explore and practice different kinds of linguistic constructions and forms (Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio 2009, p. 179). These findings brilliantly illustrate the potential of video games as an aid for language acquisition and learning.

In addition to Piirainen-Marsh's work, few Master of Arts theses have been conducted in Finland on the topic of learning English from informal settings in recent years. Uuskoski (2010) studied the correlation between upper secondary school students' English grades and playing video games. He found a clear positive correlation between time spent playing video games and good English grades. The average typical English grades of the participants were higher the more they play video games, with the average grades of those who do not play at all being the lowest and those of hardcore gamers the highest. Uuskoski also found a rising trend in the experienced gaming-related language development of the participants, correlating with the time used playing video games. In line with previous research, the areas of language most influenced by playing video games were vocabulary, listening and reading skills. Similarly to the experience of amount learned from video games, those who play more generally felt that more areas of language had developed.

Pilvi Kirppu's Master's thesis (2014) also explored the connection between playing video games and learning English. She focused on what areas of language the students think are affected by the act of gaming and how they think they have learned from it. She was also interested in the students' opinions about English as the dominant language in games. Moreover, Kirppu explored how the students' attitudes towards video game English compare to classroom English. Kirppu's participants were upper secondary school students as well, with whom she did focus group interviews. One of Kirppu's main findings is that the participants feel that playing story-centered games is by far the most useful type of gaming for language learning purposes, because of the large amounts of L2 input they provide. Her data also suggests that interaction with other players contributes highly to L2 acquisition. Kirppu's participants unanimously think that "video game English" is more useful and interesting than English used at school. Kirppu also highlights

that in order to see learning English from video games in positive light, the participants emphasise the informal nature of learning connected to gaming. If it were implemented in teaching, they feel it would take the fun out of playing games.

Alike Uuskoski and Kirppu, Noora Vidgren (2014) examined upper secondary school students' informal learning. Her focus is on the connection between informal learning and formal EFL instruction. She found that informal learners of English have are at an advantage to their peers who do not learn much English from outside the classroom. According to Vidgren's study, informal learners of English got better grades with less effort (Vidgren 2014).

3 Research methodology and data gathering

In this chapter, I introduce the data and methods used in this study. I begin with stating my research questions, upon which the chosen methods and research design have been built. I will then introduce the participants of the study and my reasons for choosing them as my informants. After that, I present the overall design of this study before giving more detailed accounts of how the questionnaire and the interviews were constructed respectively. I will first give an account on how the questionnaire was designed and how the data was gathered. I will then do the same regarding the interview data.

3.1 Research questions

I present here my research questions.

- 1) According to the experiences of the participants, what English language skills have developed by playing video games in English?
 - a) According to the experiences of the participants, how have their English language skills developed by playing video games in English?

- 2) According to the experiences of the participants, what English language skills have developed by engaging in extramural English activities?
 - a) According to the experiences of the participants, how have their English language skills developed by engaging in extramural English activities?
- 3) What extramural English activities do the participants consider most useful for English language acquisition?
- 4) How do the interviewees think of English as a language?
 - a) Have extramural English activities affected their attitudes towards the English language?

3.2 Research design

This study is qualitative in nature complemented with simple statistical calculations. More accurately, I would describe it as an intrinsic case study, which is defined by Stake (1995), as Croker and Heigham (2009) report, as a study that looks to gain an understanding of a certain phenomenon (i.e. in this case the student experience) and does not attempt to make generalizations and comparisons to other studies (Croker & Heigham 2009, pp. 69–70). I indeed wish to examine the student experience of the phenomenon of learning English from video games and other extramural activities as a case and I do not expect to be able to use the results to make any general statements on a larger scale. They also state that in a qualitative study “[t]he researcher is an intervening factor, but not one to be controlled for, as in quantitative studies. Rather, his role must be made transparent, his biases confronted, his agenda and beliefs explicitly stated, and the precise nature of his interaction with the study’s participants meticulously described” (Croker & Heigham 2009, p. 71). I have attempted to act upon this principle and create as reliable an account of the study as possible. In addition to qualitative methods of analysis, I use numerical

data gained through the questionnaire to illustrate some observations in a quantitative manner.

The questionnaire's aim was to help answer all of my four research questions. More specifically, the reason behind using a questionnaire was to get an insight of how a relatively sizable group of upper secondary students feel about extramural English learning. In other words, what English language skills do they feel have developed as a result of exercising EE activities? In addition, the questionnaire aimed at gathering data on the amount of time the participants use in English activities in their free time and what types of activities they engage in. The questionnaire data would also serve well in portraying the possible differences in EE habits of male and female participants.

Whereas the questionnaire was used to help portray opinions of a larger group of students, the aim of the interviews was to go into more detail and beyond the scope of the questionnaire. Therefore, by conducting the interviews, I wished to gain a more detailed account of few students' experiences of informal English learning, their attitudes towards, and opinions on the English language. In other words, how and in what types of situations do the participants use English?

3.2.1 The participants

The informants of this study are Finnish upper secondary school students from a single high school in Southern Finland. Heterogeneous groups of students were chosen as the informants of the questionnaire in order to receive as representative a sample of regular students of upper secondary level as possible, in the scope of the study. I chose to study upper secondary school students in particular mainly for practical reasons. First, I reason that they would be more capable to examine their relationship with the English language

cognitively than younger ESL learners would – how they have acquired it, how they use it and how they see English as a language. Thus, I felt that upper secondary level students would be well suited as the informants, as they would be capable to reflect on their own learning and their experiences, increasing the reliability of the results. Second, it was simply more straightforward to deal with adults for the ease of access in getting data for this thesis. Third, as I mentioned earlier, while I studied in upper secondary school, it was the time when engaging in EE activities provided the best results in terms of my English language learning and development. Especially playing video games in English led me to use English actively in various ways, and therefore there is a personal interest in students of this age in particular.

3.3 Survey data and methods

In this section, I will explain the methodology behind the creation of the final questionnaire form (see Appendix A) and the collection procedure of the questionnaire data.

3.3.1 Questionnaire design

I designed the questionnaire with Dörnyei's (2007) methodology as a backdrop. I also consulted Alanen (2011) throughout the making of the questionnaire. I decided to do the questionnaire in Finnish because I felt that that would allow the participants to express their attitudes and experiences regarding the topic of the study confidently and fluently. Consequently, I put a great deal of effort into the formulation and wording of the questions to extract as detailed answers as possible. I did not start from scratch, however, but took inspiration from other studies dealing with English learning and video games (Kirppu 2014; Sundqvist 2009a; Uuskoski 2011). I still ended up formulating most of the

questions myself, but for instance used similar categories in the multiple choice questions as Uuskoski. For instance, in questions 1 and 11, I chose days rather than weeks as the timeframe, because in my experience a person would be able to think about their average day more easily than their average week. Thus, the participants could more accurately assess the time used in certain activities on a daily scale. To increase the clarity of the questionnaire, I divided it in three sections. The first is concerned with the background information of the participant, i.e. the age, gender, and whether and for how long they have lived abroad or been on exchange. The second and the largest section, questions 1 to 10, is about the participant's video gaming habits and the resulting learning of English. The third and final section deals with other EE activities of the participants and similarly to the second section, the resulting English learning

The questionnaire was also piloted and peer reviewed in the seminar group and modeled according to the given suggestions before any data was gathered. In order to elicit as much relevant data as possible, there are also open questions and open spaces in addition to the multiple choice questions, so that the participants could clarify and elaborate on their answers. The emphasis of learning by playing video games in English is evident in the number of questions allotted to the topic. Ten of the total fifteen questions deal with the participants' experiences of learning English by playing video games, whereas other EE activities were considered in the remaining five questions.

In addition to qualitative content analysis, simple methods of descriptive statistical analysis were used when dealing with the questionnaire data.

3.3.2 Conducting the survey

The questionnaire data was gathered in May 2017 from six different groups of Finnish EFL upper secondary school students from a single school. I was in contact with a teacher that I knew from before and asked whether she would like to aid me in getting data for my thesis. She gladly agreed to help, and through her, I got two other teachers from the same school on board as well. I then arranged to come to two of each teacher's normal EFL classes to conduct my survey over the following two weeks, resulting in six classes – six groups of participants. The classes were all ongoing in the same study period so there was no risk of the same students answering the questionnaire more than once. I made sure of this by asking the class before they took the questionnaire whether someone had already taken it with some other group. The informants were told prior to taking the questionnaire that the answers would be treated completely anonymously and that they would only be viewed and analysed by the researcher and not given to any third parties. This information is also stated on the first page of the questionnaire form. The participants then answered the questionnaire on printed out forms and during their normal English lesson so that they would be inclined to think of the questionnaire as a part of their lesson, thus answering it carefully. Therefore, the supervising teacher and I were present in the classroom while the participants answered the questionnaire individually. Printed out questionnaire forms were a preferred choice to an electronic survey to avoid technical issues and using paper forms suits the purposes of doing the survey in class better. It took the participants approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to answer. I collected the filled out forms personally from the individual participants to respect their anonymity in the way that their answers could not be seen by their fellow students or the teacher. It is worth mentioning, though, that the participants sat next to each other in pairs, so there was a

chance that their neighbors would see their answers. This could have hypothetically had an effect on how the participants answered the questions due to peer pressure, and therefore could slightly affect the reliability of the results. The outcome was a total of 117 respondents.

3.4 Interview data and methods

I will explain the methods and data gathering procedures used in the interview part of my study in the following sections. The questions I used as the core of the interviews can be found as an attachment to this thesis (see Appendix B).

3.4.1 Interview design and methodology

I designed the interview structure along the guidelines of Richards (2003) and Hyvärinen and Löyttyniemi (2005) with the final design of the interview structure stemming from the data gathered through the questionnaire. I formulated the final interview structure only after analysing the questionnaire data to use the interviews to elicit information that the questionnaire was not able to or I wanted the interviews to elaborate on in light of the research questions. In regard the aim of this study, as rich and detailed a report from the participants is desired. Thus, as an interview method I decided on using a version of a semi-structured narrative interview. Hyvärinen and Löyttyniemi's (2005) describe it as follows: In order to get best possible input from the interviewees, it is important for the interviewer to try to create as relaxed an atmosphere as possible and a good relationship with the interviewee. This can be achieved by starting easily and asking warm up questions (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005, p. 41). The intention was always to let the conversation flow freely and to use the structure only as a backdrop to draw from, should

the conversation not continue naturally, and as a checklist for the interviewer to control that all the desired topics were covered.

Open-ended questions were designed to allow the students to express themselves in their own words and to get as many examples and narratives as possible, instead of just yes or no answers. I put effort in trying not to lead the interviewees with my questions to answer in a certain way, thus aiming at a reliable account. Richards explains, “In interviews we are concerned only with encouraging the speaker, not with putting our own point across, so the skills we need are still collaborative, but they are focused on drawing from the speaker the richest and fullest account possible” (Richards 2003). To perform according to Richards’ guidelines, I tried to encourage the interviewees as best I could to express themselves freely by aiming to create a relaxed atmosphere.

3.4.2 Conducting the interviews

In addition to the questionnaire, I conducted three one-on-one interviews with volunteer students who stated in the questionnaire that they play video games in English and feel they have benefited from that in learning English. Of all the volunteers, I chose those for the interview that met these criteria. Almost a year passed between taking the questionnaire and doing the interviews, which was not initially my intention. In hindsight, this may have been beneficial for my study, since there might have been changes in the interviewees’ EE habits and more time for them to reflect on their learning. Having left me their contact information while volunteering at the end of the questionnaire form, I contacted the interviewees via Whatsapp and email and set up the interviews individually with the participants. As the location, I chose a quiet public café in Helsinki, because of its easy accessibility and relative quietness in order to get good quality audio recordings of the interviews. I had a preparatory discussion with each interviewee, in which I

explained the purpose of the study and the interview, gave an estimation of the length of the interview, reassured them that the data would be handled carefully and confidentially, and thanked them for taking the time. I also mentioned my own interest in playing video games to get them relaxed and ready for the interview. Before starting the actual interviews, the interviewees gave their informed consent to the recording of the interviews and using the recordings for this study. Informed consent means that they signed a consent form after I had told them what I would actually do with the data as carefully as I could (Cameron 2001, p. 23). I used my own smartphone to record the interviews and transferred the audio files onto my computer.

The recorded interviews were then transcribed and translated for the relevant parts by me. The interviews were approximately equally long, the total duration of the interviews being 95 minutes and 26 seconds. All three interviews were conducted in Finnish for the same reasons the questionnaire was also done in Finnish, and because that was either everyone's mother tongue or otherwise the strongest language. One interviewee reported having lived in England for a lengthy period and I asked him whether he would like to do the interview in English, but he too preferred to do it in Finnish. Thus, the participants had the possibility of producing their most eloquent answers and of expressing themselves most completely. Furthermore, it was likely also more comfortable for them to speak in their mother tongue to a stranger, which would further the creation of a relaxed interview atmosphere overall, as intended. All participants seemed eager to share their experiences and opinions, and no technical problems occurred with the interviews. So, I feel like the interviews went well.

3.4.3 Transcription

I transcribed the interview audio recordings by using the free software Soundsciber. I first transcribed the whole interviews in Finnish. I then translated relevant parts of the transcripts into English for them to be used as examples in this thesis. Since this thesis focuses on the opinions and experiences of the participants, I used a very loose transcription method, paying attention only to the actual content of the interviewee utterances. In fact, Cameron points out “there is never a point when your transcript becomes the definitive, ‘full and faithful’ representation of your data” (Cameron 2003: 39). She also points out that the more detail the transcript goes into the more the readability suffers (Cameron 2003, p. 39). Furthermore, she emphasises the decision on the detail of transcription to be based on the purposes, for which the data has been collected. She explains, “what is worth including in a transcript depends on what you want to do with that transcript afterwards” (Cameron 2003: 39). I have also only translated the content and left out details naturally occurring in speech, such as hesitation, laughter pauses, repetition, and overlaps since they are not relevant for my analysis. Furthermore, I have used no punctuation in the transcriptions, and have only capitalized proper nouns. I have not altered this formula when using excerpts of the transcripts as examples in the analysis.

4 Analysis and findings

In this chapter, I will report the analysis of the data under two main sections: the questionnaire and the interviews. I begin with the questionnaire data and then deal with the interviews. Both sets of data aim at answering all four of my research questions, and I report the results discussing the questions. The questionnaire section will consider

research questions I will present a summary of the findings on both sets of data at the end of the chapter.

4.1 The survey

As a principle, when the participant had checked two boxes when only one was required, the higher value was always considered the answer (i.e. if the student checked both “less than an hour” and “1 to 2 hours” in question 1, “1 to 2 hours” would be counted as the answer). There were only few occasions, where I needed to act upon this principle. There were also two other problems I encountered in the questionnaire data. On a total of six occasions in either question 12 or 13, there were more than three choices selected, which was the instructed amount. However, I considered this failure in answering technique so minimal that it would not affect the reporting of the data in a meaningful way, as the examination of these questions would focus on the quantity of each particular choice and there would not be a fixed total number of entries. Thus, I accepted the answers as they are and they count towards the calculations in their respective categories. In questions 3, 4 and 12 the students had the possibility to choose the option “other, what”. When that option was selected, and the student’s answer would fall under an already existing category, I would make a choice about including the answer within said category. For instance, should a student answer Youtube in question 12, I would include that answer in “social media”. In other cases, which were so few that specifying the other entries would not benefit the reporting of the results, these answers were grouped under the category “other”. Furthermore, considering their rarity, specifying the answers in the report might also increase the chance of recognizing the participant on the basis of the answer, thus being potentially threatening the anonymity of the participants.

When analyzing the devices used to play video games (question 4), phones and tablets are reported under the term *phones* for the sake of clarity. Similarly, TV and movies, including all streaming applications (Netflix, HBO, Amazon, Yle Areena etc.), are all grouped as a single category.

I have structured the analysis of the questionnaire data thematically. First, I will briefly present the background of the participants based on their answers. Second, I look at the participants' experiences of learning English from video games. I do this in two parts, presenting the gaming habits of the participants (questions 1 to 10 of the questionnaire) before moving on to discussing their experiences of learning English from video games. Third, I provide analysis of the other EE activities the participants engage in and what English learning ensues (questions 11 to 14).

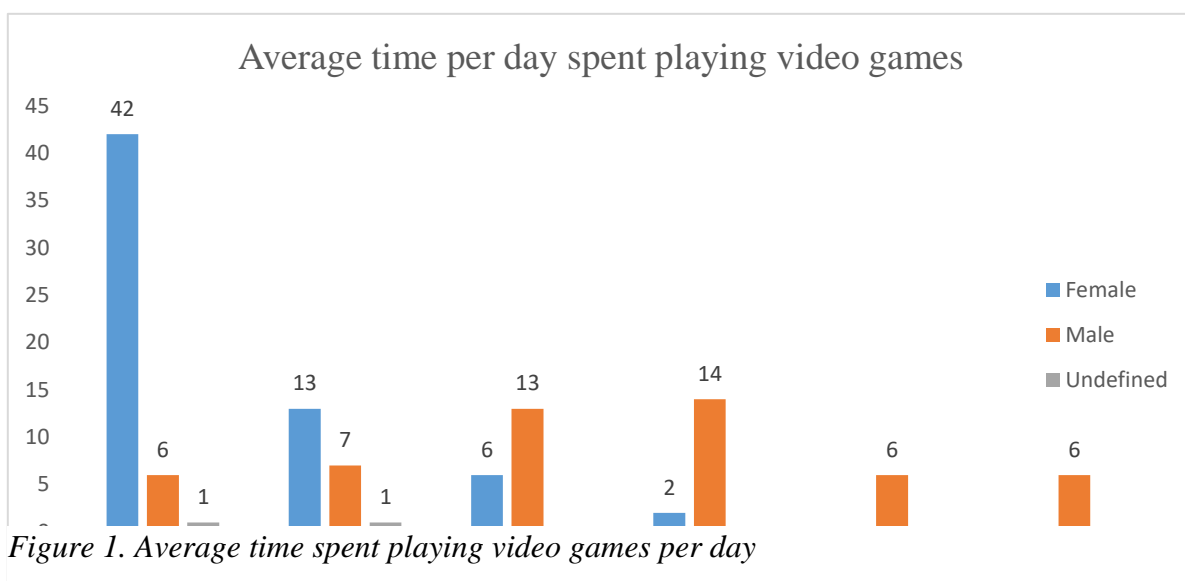
4.1.1 Background information of the participants

Of the 117 participants in the questionnaire, 63 are female, 52 male and two decided not to report their gender. All the participants were of age from 16 to 19 years at the time of the questionnaire data gathering. I also inquired whether a participant had lived or spent a significant amount of time abroad in a country where they would have used mainly English as the language of everyday communication. Nine students reported having lived abroad in English speaking countries for times ranging from less than a year to several years. In hindsight, I should have added a question about how the students feel the time spent living abroad has affected their English language skills and learning to be able to use the information of them having lived abroad in any sensible way. Now, in my estimation, that information is null in terms of this study, as there is no clear correlation with time spent living abroad to the students' reported experience of learning English from video games or other extramural activities.

4.1.2 Video gaming habits of the participants

First, I would like to note that only 5 of the 68 participants (7.4 %), who report playing video games in English, let known that only some of the video games they play are in English (Question 2 of the questionnaire). The rest of the participants who do play video games (n=63), say that at least half of the games they play are in English. Furthermore, a considerable majority, 57 of the 63, claim that all or most of the video games they play are in English. Thus, in the context of this study, when henceforth speaking of playing video games, I always mean playing video games in English. Furthermore, I saw no reason to leave out any of the aforementioned five persons' answers to other questions about the experiences of playing video games and English learning, since it was specified in every related question of the questionnaire that particularly video games in English be meant.

One of the aims of the study was to gather information on the students' habits of playing video games in English in their free time. The most important detail about those habits is the time used to play video games. Figure 1 below shows the average time the participants spend playing video games in English per day. A single largest group of the participants



(n=49, 41.9 %) reported that they do not play regularly at all. This, however, does not mean that they have never played any games at all, but only demonstrates that playing video games is not a part of their frequent activities. Therefore, their answers do count towards the results as well. The majority of the participants (n=68, 58.1 %) say that they play video games in English, if only for some minutes at a time and perhaps not every day. However, of those who play video games in English, only 12 participants (10.3 %) report using more than an hour a day on average to play video games in English. Even less, only six participants (5.1 %), report playing over 2 hours a day. This is not a surprising result, because gaming is a hobby much like anything else and is something, in which not everyone is interested. Furthermore, spending two hours on any activity on a daily basis speaks of a true commitment. Even an hour a day on average is quite much in my estimation. Consequently, and as expected, the majority of participants who do play video games (56 out of 68) report playing approximately less than an hour per day.

I arranged the answers in separate columns by gender to find out whether playing video games is still a male-dominated extramural activity, as previous research suggests (Sundqvist 2009a; Uuskoski 2011). Figure 1 shows that this indeed seems to be the case. There are only two female participants in this sample who report playing more than half an hour a day (still less than 1 h), whereas the corresponding number for male participants is fourteen. Furthermore, no female participants report playing more than an hour a day whatsoever. In proportion, six male students say they play 1 to 2 hours a day and another six inform playing more than 2 hours a day. Also the number of female participants reporting to not play at all (n=42) is significantly higher than that of male participants (n=6), which further underlines the tendency of boys playing video games more than girls

do. Another important aspect of the phenomenon of learning from video gaming is the devices people use. Figure 2 shows that two devices stand out as most used: phones and

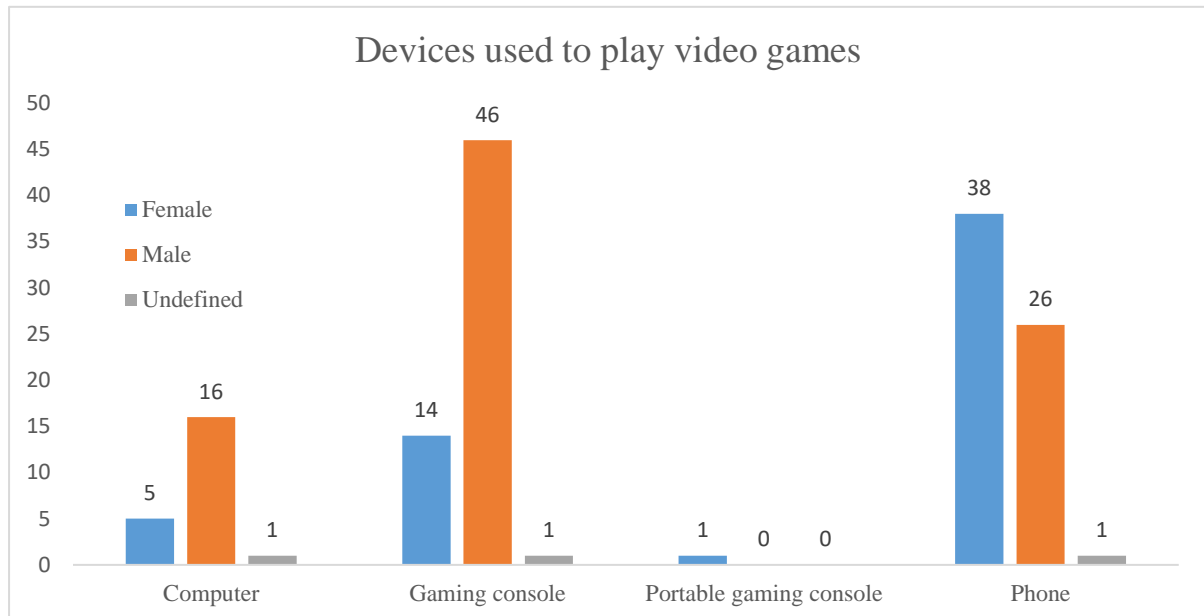


Figure 2. Devices used to play video games

gaming consoles. The participants were allowed to choose as many different devices they use for gaming, as they wanted. *Phone* (including tablet computers) is reported as a device for gaming by 65 participants (55.6 %) and 61 (52.1 %) inform using a *gaming console* to play video games with. The high number of entries of *phone* can be partly explained by the fact that 20 participants, who said they do not normally play at all, still chose *phone* as a device used for gaming. This implies that phones are used for casual gaming and not a lot of time is necessarily spent gaming. Surprisingly, female participants make up the bulk of phone gamers, with 38 out of 65 (58.5 %) being female, which can partly be explained by the casual nature of mobile gaming. Also, the participants, who play more often, use phones for gaming in addition to other devices such as consoles and computers, which are usually used for more serious gaming. Therefore, the gender divide regarding the use of computers and gaming consoles is as expected. The majority of console gamers, 38 out of 52 (73.1 %), are male.

4.1.3 Video games and English learning

In this subchapter, I will report the participants' experiences of their English skills development as a result of playing video games. I first present how much the participants feel their language skills in general have benefited from gaming before examining what aspects of language specifically they feel have improved via this activity.

The results of the inquiry on the participants' experience of having learned English from playing video games are very evenly balanced, as can be seen from Figure 3. Quite predictably, the most frequent answer is "some", selected by 52 informants (44.4 %). According to only 33 participants (28.2 %), playing video games has had no or only little effect on the development of their English skills. Conversely, 80 informants (68.4 %) feel that video gaming has had at least some positive effect on their English skills.

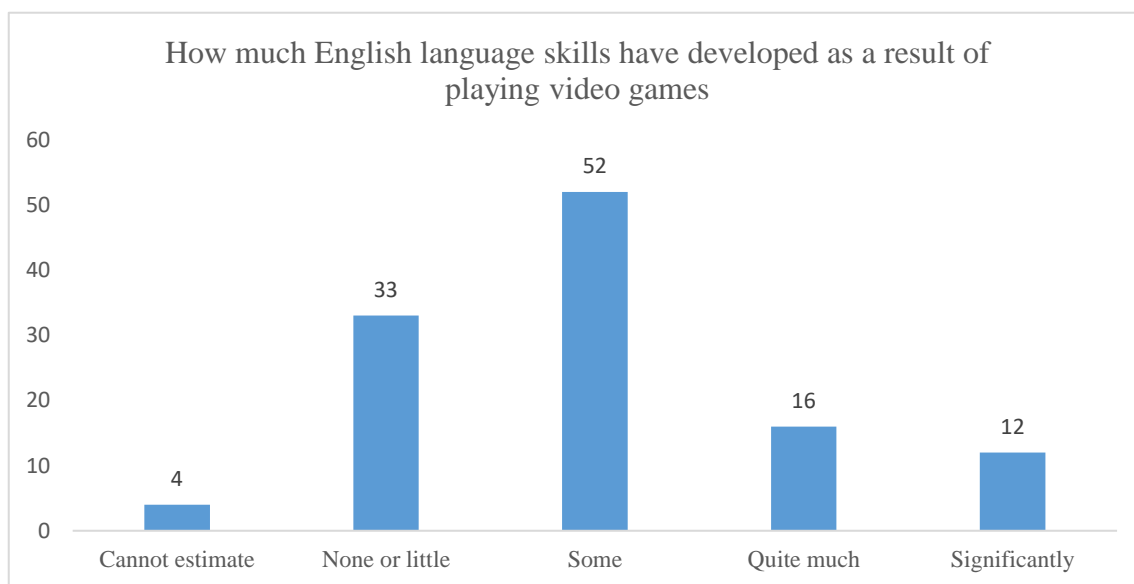


Figure 3. The effect of video games on English skills development

28 participants (23.9 %) even claim that gaming has affected their English learning considerably, i.e. "quite much" or "significantly". It is not surprising that people who spend much of their pastime playing video games feel that it has been a factor in their language development. On the other hand, six participants who say they spend less than

half an hour a day playing video games still declare that they have learned significantly via the activity. Another ten casual players feel their English skill development has been significantly affected by playing video games.

Having established how much the participants feel video games have affected their English development, it is logical to proceed to examining what the aspects of language are that have improved, according to the participants. Figure 4 below portrays the participants' answers to question 7 of the questionnaire. The number of choices selected was not limited in this instance.

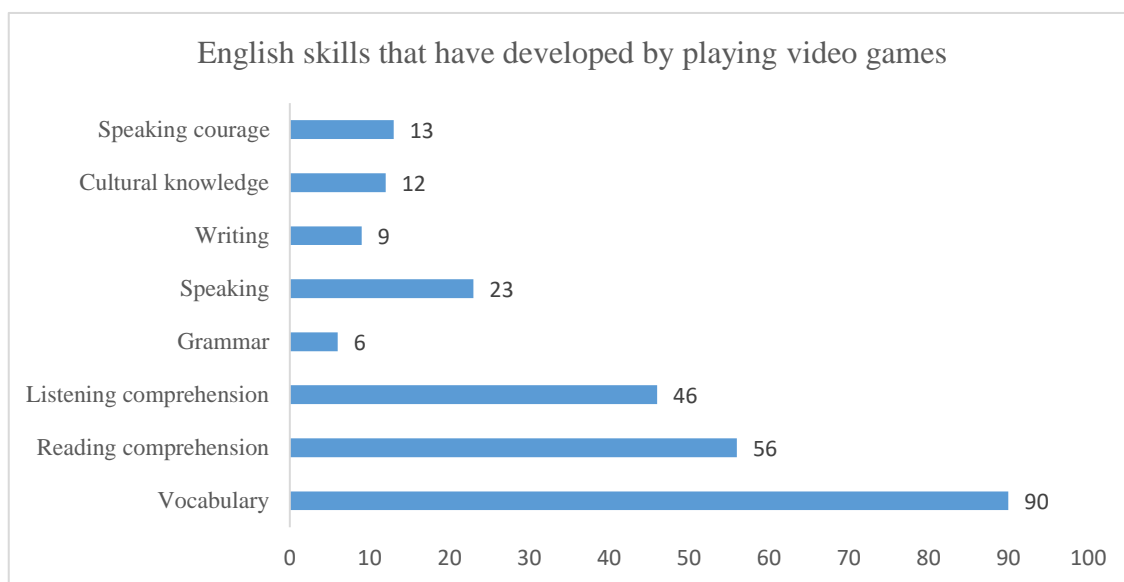


Figure 4. English skills that have developed by playing video games

The outcome is clear. Vocabulary is reportedly the single most affected aspect with 90 participants (76.9 %) claiming their vocabulary has improved by playing video games. Reading and listening comprehension are the two next most selected answers after vocabulary with 56 (47.9 %) and 46 (39.3 %) entries respectively. Encouragingly, 23 participants (19.7 %) also claim improvement in their speaking skill resulting from playing video games. This is what many participants emphasised in their open answers.

“My language has become more fluent and natural. New words are a big part of learning.”

To get a more detailed insight on what language skills the students think playing video games has improved, I provide here some of their answers to question 8 of the questionnaire. “Gaming has expanded my vocabulary and slightly improved my reading comprehension. Games have taught words that I probably would not learn at school, for example.” Multiple entries handled the expansion of the participant’s vocabulary through gaming. The participants are also eager to point out that often the words learned from games are different to the ones used at school. One participant in particular emphasises that his vocabulary has grown enormously by playing video games, and that the words learned indeed differ from the ones taught at school. Another account reads, “[I have learned] different themes of words and understanding of clauses without knowing all the words.” Learning of new words from games is also vital for the success of the gaming activity itself, because unless you keep learning the vocabulary of the game, you might not be able to follow the story. Another student writes that “especially [their] passive vocabulary has grown”. Accounts simply stating that the participant’s vocabulary has improved are numerous.

In addition to theme vocabularies, an area that playing video games seems to have improved is determining meaning from the context, i.e. reading and listening comprehension. “[Playing video games] has expanded my vocabulary (e.g. professional vocabulary and difficult words). Keeping up with the story also requires reading and listening comprehension.” Some participants mention having become more aware of the structure of language, and do not think their vocabulary development is just merely learning new words, but language use in general. “[I have] learned structures of the

spoken language and how language is really used – phrases and utterances.” One participant is able to give a concrete example of learning: she shares having learned the points of the compass from a game as a primary school student. Another account points out the logical advantage of learning from games: “I have learned to use the vocabulary I have learned from gaming also in real life situations, like at school.” A couple of participants specify that understanding spoken language has become easier having practiced while playing video games. “I have learned quite a lot of vocabulary and to understand other players.” “I have learned to understand English and got accustomed to listening to it.” “In general, that you see and hear English helps to learn. Maybe understanding spoken language in particular improves the most.”

“Video gaming upholds the already learned English skills.”

4.1.4 Other EE activities and English learning

After having looked at how the participants’ experience learning English by playing video games, I now turn my attention to the other EE activities they engage in frequently. I start with portraying the EE habits of the participants by showing how much time they spend in EE activities other than playing video games. I will then look more closely at what activities the participants usually spend most time with in their spare time.

Even as English is a part of our everyday lives and in addition to studying English at school, the participants also seem to spend considerable amounts of time in EE activities knowingly. We see how much the participants spend time on EE activities, apart from

playing video games, daily on average in Figure 5 below. Again, there are separate columns for each gender to illustrate the possible differences of activity in that regard.

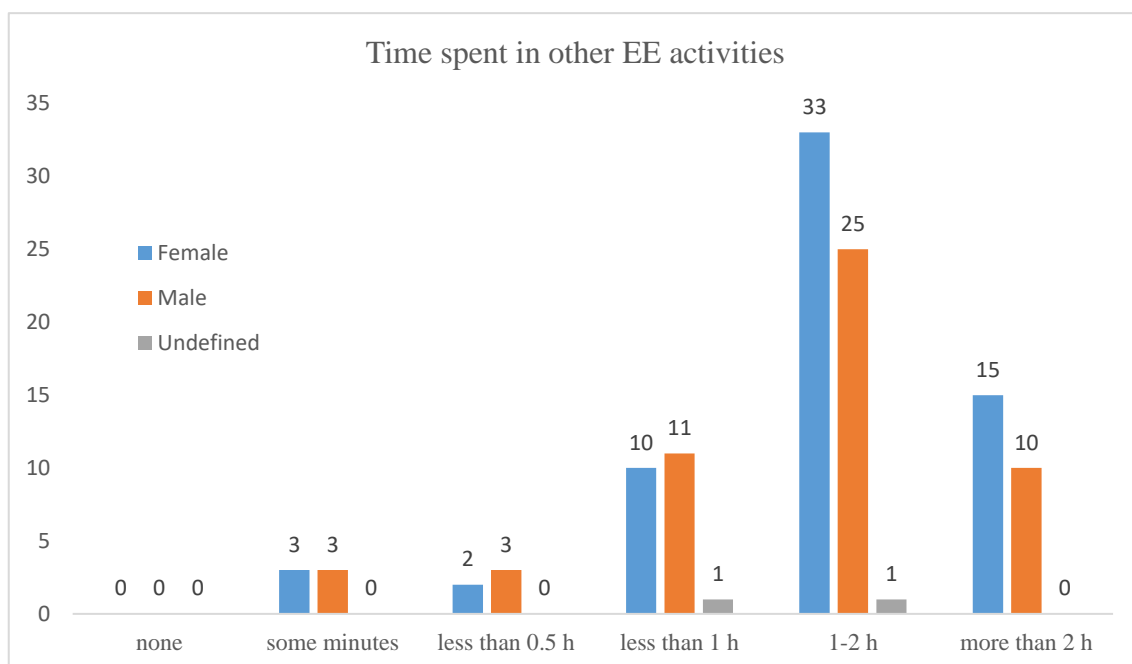


Figure 5. Time spent in other EE activities.

It is remarkable that not a single participant states that they do not use English at all in their free time, more than confirming the prevalence of English in Finland. Another observation that stands out is that the considerable majority, 84 of the participants (71.8 %), spends at least an hour a day in EE activities. Roughly a fifth of the participants spend even more than two hours a day in connection to English. Unlike what Sylvén found (2004), that boys engaged in EE more, it seems that at least in my sample, girls are exposed to more extramural English than boys.

Now that we know how long the upper secondary students spend in activities that somehow deal with English, what are then the activities the participants spend their time engaging in? In figure 6 below, we can see the distribution of the participants' answers to that question (question 12 of the questionnaire).

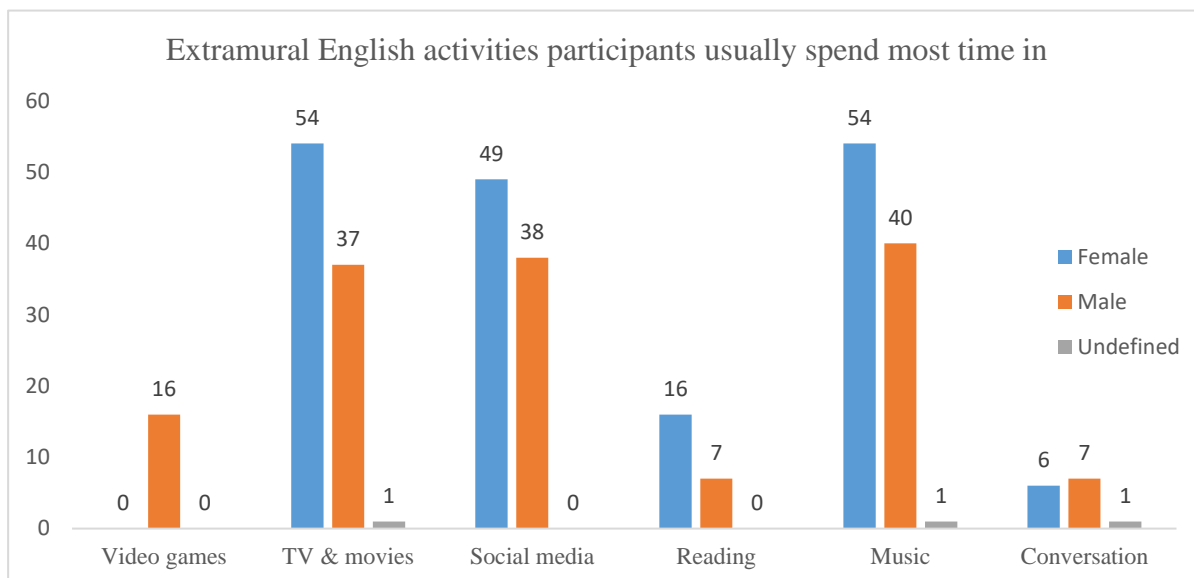


Figure 6. Extramural English activities, in which the participants spend most time

As figure 6 shows, three activities stand out as the most popular: using social media, watching TV and movies, and listening to (or making) music. Similarly to Sundqvist (2009a), *music* comes out as the most popular answer among the participants with 95 students (81.2 %) reporting that as one of their most common EE activities. According to the data, watching TV and movies are among the usual EE activities of 92 participants (78.6 %). Using social media is the third most frequent answer, as 87 participants (74.4 %), put that in their top three activities. These three are the most commonly given answers in this sample by a large margin. Interestingly, video games are among the top three time-consuming activities for only 16 students, all of whom are male. Apart from playing video games, there seem to be no gender differences in the participants' experience of spending time in certain EE activities worth mentioning. The data suggests that the participants do not seem to do much of reading in their free time, nor do they converse much in English. However, the students were only allowed to choose three choices when answering this question, so what these numbers illustrate is only that the activities with less frequent answers are not among the top three activities the participants spend time in.

What language skills, then, do the EE activities enhance? As was the case with video games and learning, similarly, almost everyone mentions vocabulary as having improved from engaging in other EE activities. In comparison to video games (see Figure 4), the

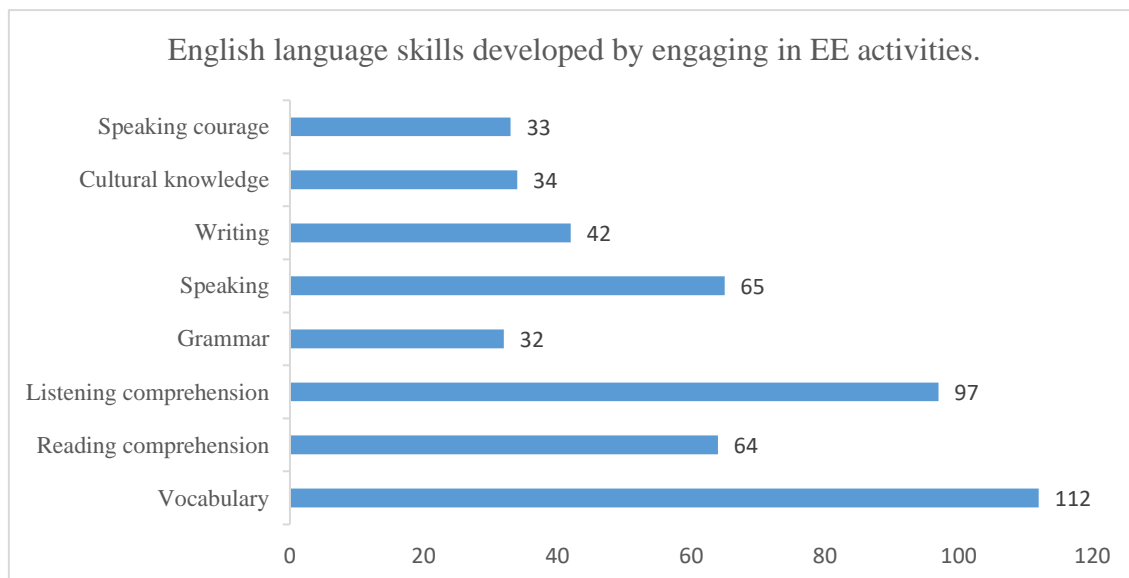


Figure 7. Language skills developed by engaging in EE activities.

risen number of entries for *listening comprehension*, *reading comprehension* and *speaking* can be explained by the broad spectrum of activities included in this set of data. Improved listening comprehension is strongly linked to music and visual media, whereas the increase of experienced development of reading comprehension is explained by engagement in social media and reading in general. Interestingly, while still having been selected least frequently, *grammar* has 32 entries. Learning grammar is usually linked strongly with school English, which is also discussed as part of the analysis of the interview data later on. Therefore, it is surprising to see even that high a number.

One of my research questions was to explore how useful the participants think different EE activities are. The results of this exploration can be deduced from Figure 8. It is interesting to see, whether the use of time in certain activities correlates with the perceived usefulness of the same activities.

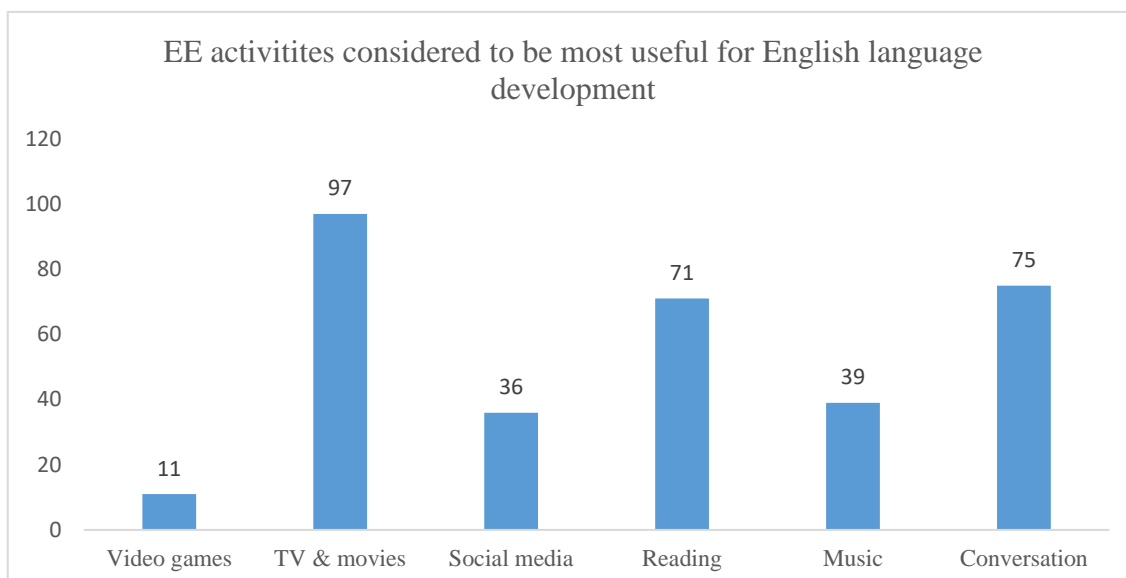


Figure 8. Most useful extramural English activities for English language development

First, I would like to raise the observation that even though only 14 participants acknowledge *conversation* among the EE activities they spend most time in (see Figure 6 for comparison), a vastly larger group of 75 participants consider it to be among the most useful activities for learning English. In the open answers, of those who provided a comment, the majority highlight speaking English as the best way to learn. A participant phrases this conception, “It’s important to use and produce language a lot and in many ways”. Speaking a language requires active and cognitive effort from the speaker, which is most effective.

“Watching English speaking TV series, in my opinion, has taught language the best outside of school.”

Another activity that many participants feel has been highly beneficial for L2 acquisition, is watching English TV series and movies with English subtitles or without subtitles altogether. In fact, 97 participants (82.9 %) feel this way. This result correlates well with the statistic of time spent in said action. For instance, one participant writes, “[watching] TV series develops listening comprehension and vocabulary enormously.” Another one

contemplates, “Watching Netflix in English develops so called ‘English thinking’. English as a language is so dominant that it inevitably sticks to you”. A third student claims that “watching movies has considerably improved [her] listening comprehension”.

In addition to watching TV and speaking with someone, *reading* is also listed among the top three most useful activities. One participant acknowledges reading having been most useful for herself: “Reading books has been very useful and important for me. I have read many books in English, especially last year, and I feel that my vocabulary has grown and I generally started to understand better without much effort.” Reading has its obvious advantages of expanding vocabulary and increasing reading comprehension skill.

It is also only logical that people feel they have learned most from the things they do the most – if you listen to a lot of music you would feel you have learned much from it. In light of the data, this statement is true.

4.2 The interviews

This chapter handles the analysis of the data of the recorded interviews. I interviewed three volunteers from the group of students that took part in the questionnaire. The analysis of the interviews is structured thematically. I begin with a description of the participants’ gaming habits and language backgrounds, in order to put their informal English learning from EE activities into perspective. Secondly, I examine the interviewees’ relationship with video games, and illustrate what language learning has resulted from gaming. Thirdly, I discuss their other extramural use of English and the interviewees’ thoughts on informal language learning compared to learning English at school. Finally, I end this chapter with an account of the participants’ attitudes towards English. I have chosen to refer to the interviewees with altered names to protect their

anonymity, but prefer to use proper names instead of technical ones (i.e. interviewee 1) to help the reader of this thesis to follow. Thus, I call the interviewees Adam, Ben and Chris. I have also, slightly changed some personal information shared by the interviewees when necessary for the same reasons.

4.2.1 Gaming habits and backgrounds of the interviewees

All three of my informants state that practically all the games that they have ever played are in English, as is the norm in the video gaming community. Very few attractive games are even available in Finnish, for example, and even if they were, the common conception is that it would feel weird not to play in English. Like Adam puts it: “of course there are [games] that you can get in Finnish but then it feels somehow like a bit weird to play them in Finnish when friends play in English and so on”. This is especially true with online multiplayer games like Counter Strike, Fortnite, Battlegrounds, Call of Duty and sports games, some of which all three participants state having played. This is because it is essential to share the common language of the game with other players and that is usually English.

Adam comes from a multilingual background, his mother being Finnish and his father African. He knows Arabic and some French in addition to English and his mother tongue Finnish. Having also spent a lot of time in Africa on holidays, Adam is accustomed to use English as the primary language of communication when it is the only shared language between the conversation parties. Furthermore, his parents both use English as a working language, which also occasionally presents itself at home. Adam tells that he plays video games two hours a day on average.

Ben has learned English as L2 in Finland and has not lived abroad. He plays less video games now than he did at the time of taking the questionnaire, when he told he plays less than 30 minutes a day. Instead, he uses the time he spends online in other EE activities.

Chris has gone through English schooling in Finland, and he also lived in Britain for five years as a child. As a result, he would even consider English being his strongest language, although he feels his English and Finnish competences are very equal and he feels that neither is as strong as he would hope.

Me: would you say that English is a stronger
 language for you than Finnish

Chris: Well I do understand English for example
 instructions I guess I maybe understand English
 easier than some complicated Finnish words so
 yes

Chris' video gaming habits have intensified in the year passed since the questionnaire was taken: in the questionnaire, he claimed to play one to two hours a day and now he approximates that even three or more hours could be spent playing video games daily, but naturally not every day.

4.2.2 Video games and English development

Now that I have presented the language backgrounds the interviewees come from and what their average video gaming habits are, I will now look at how the interviewees experience having learned English from playing video games. Expressly, how much they feel they have learned and what language skills in particular they feel have improved. All three participants give much credit of their English development to playing video games, even Ben, who does not play that much anymore.

Primarily, the interviewees highlight vocabulary as the main feature that video gaming has affected. In light of the findings of the survey, where 90 participants (76.9 %) indicate vocabulary improvement resulting from video gaming, this could be expected. Other areas of language that the interviewees feel have improved include reading and listening comprehension, pronunciation, speaking and communication skills overall. I will examine the experiences regarding the development of each skill in turn.

All three interviewees claim that playing video games has improved their vocabulary and that they have learned special theme words by gaming. In Ben's words: "I would say that it [video games] develops kind of specific vocabulary very much so I would say that I have learned quite a bit from there". Here is what Adam had to say about the learning of vocabulary when I asked about what aspects of English he has learned from playing video games:

- Adam: Well at least like you know like corresponding vocabulary I'd say that not so relevant for school or societal use but like names guns and so on
- Me: Mm yes
- Adam: Yeah and then in Fifa like even though football is also dealt with on the courses [at school] so then like more accurately football-related vocabulary and I play football myself so it's good to know about it
- Me: Do you listen to the commentaries
- Adam: Yeah I always do and then the exclamations find other uses for example if you are on the pitch with friends so then you can use the utterances used by the commentators

In addition to mere words, Adam points out, that longer utterances, such as phrases and exclamations, can also be learned from games. Ben thinks along the same lines and states

that “you get many phrases”. Moreover, the words that are learned may not always be relevant for what he labels “school or societal use” and thus can be only used in very specific contexts. Like Adam, the other interviewees also point out not being necessarily able to use the vocabulary learned from games in situations other than gaming. This is not of course always the case, and as Adam explains, e.g. football words learned from a video game can be used while playing actual football. I think that learning vocabulary comes across as dominantly as it does as an improved area of language, because it is easy to think of concrete examples to back up the claim. It is relatively easy to pinpoint that one has learned football vocabulary from a football game or names of weapons from war simulators.

Chris links his experience of learning vocabulary from games to being able to communicate better. “Of course I learn some words and so on. I can give advice better and then I feel that I can communicate better with other people the more I have played.” Improved communication skills is another topic that all the interviewees raise as having say has developed by playing video games. As Chris points out in the previous quote, giving advice is one thing that he feels has become easier. As an example he mentions giving directions to tourists, which he likes to do, even more so now that he feels he has become quite fluent in it. He also underlines being able to express oneself more clearly and in more ways than one, which can be seen in the passage below.

- Chris: when in games it [English] is always present it
 anyway develops speaking skills when you have
 to speak all the time
- Me: right
- Chris: to each other so it helps a little in a way you can
 if you mumble in English you can like try to
 express it better and say the word better so then
 you learn too

- Me: right so there would you experience that pronunciation
- Chris: yes pronunciation I improve my pronunciation when I speak it continually more so it only gets better so if no-one can make sense of what I am saying in English then of course I try to say the sentence much better

Ben has similar experiences of developed speaking skills via gaming to Chris.

- Me: when you have spoken English while playing do you think it has been beneficial
- Ben: uhm I would say it's even better than if for instance you have a made-up conversation in English class
- Me: mhm
- Ben: then it would probably go straight into a set topic which the task underlines but when you have a common cause together that you're trying to achieve it kind of forces you to understand each other

In addition to obviously understanding one another, better communication also leads to better results in the game itself – it helps you to accomplish objectives and succeed in the games. For instance, Chris says that in *Counter Strike* "well you always need to communicate who goes where and when to strike and when to advance so you need to be very good at communicating".

Adam and Ben emphasise their gaming events often being social ones with friends coming over to play or vice versa, in addition to regularly playing online with other people. Ben clarifies that he usually plays games, in which one can split the screen, with his friends so that they can all play simultaneously and in the same space. Adam says that he usually plays with friends and prefers that to playing alone. Playing with friends more

often than not means that they play the same game online. “For example namely on Play Station there’s this group conversation you can create so then we can speak online.” With friends, though, the speaking is mainly in Finnish, but complemented with some English. For example, Adam has a friend who commentates on the game when they play Fifa against each other, which he considers “quite annoying but then again pretty funny too”. When there are no friends online, Adam says the following: “but then for instance if when playing Fortnite there don’t happen to be any friends about there might come [to the group chat] some foreign people so then you speak English”. According to him, these types of situations occur once or twice a week. That naturally occurring English use takes place so frequently, is definitely beneficial for Adam. In addition, he mentions that there have been no major difficulties in understanding other players’ English so far. In the same vein, when I asked him what skills he feels have developed by playing video games, he replied:

- Adam: precisely the interaction that how you learn to work with a stranger for example in Fortnite when you have those group discussions so through that you learn like basic interaction skills you know
- Me: yes yes and then there were the dialects and others
- Adam: yes dialects them too

Naturally, also reading and listening comprehension skills develop by continuous input of English via games, as Ben points out. “If there are tasks in the games and when they’re given instructions for there’s quite a lot of reading comprehension and understanding speech at the same time.” Overall, according to my data, playing video games seems beneficial to English learning on many fronts.

4.2.3 Other EE activities and English learning

In this subchapter, I show what other EE activities the interviewees engage in and what they feel they have learned from the most. I deal with the activities separately, the order of my account being music, TV and movies, speaking with other people, and social media.

Music came out on top in the survey results and is strongly represented in the interview data as well. Again, improved vocabulary comes across as an easily noticeable aspect of language that has developed from listening to and making music, according to the participants. In Adam's words:

- Adam: with music if there's a new song you start to really think about the lyrics what is being said and what is meant by it and if there comes a weird word in the middle of the chorus which is a central part of the storytelling or what the song is about
- Me: *approving sound*
- Adam: so then you check it online and that is studying in a way

So, according to Adam, both passive and active learning often occur when one listens to music. Informal learning, too, naturally intensifies when it is cognitive, as is the case when one intentionally looks up song lyrics in order to decipher their meaning. Ben reveals to being passionate about music and says that it is the activity he spends most his spare time with. Here he reflects on learning English when enjoying music, also bringing up the role of cognition:

- Ben: that way [listening to and making music] comes a whole lot
- well I don't necessarily always concentrate that hard on the lyrics while listening to music what is being said

- Me: right
- Ben: but when I lay on the bed and listen to music from headphones I am kind of forced to concentrate on it more and then you think about it and as I listen to a lot of rap music
- Me: okay
- Ben: so that way the lyrics gain a bigger meaning especially with certain artists you like want to know what they say

Interpreting song lyrics is obviously beneficial for the development of multiple aspects of language, specifically listening comprehension and vocabulary. Additionally, Ben continues to state that music illustrates well how versatile language is and how it can be altered in so many ways. Especially, when a musician is working with verses, trying to make a text fit into the pattern and the rhythm of the music, English shows its versatility, according to Ben:

- Ben: there's a lot of how language can be applied to different situations that certain things can be said in so many different ways and then you notice that oh it can be said like that too
- and you notice that in order to fit a sentence to some specific part of the song you might take something out without losing the original meaning
- then you just modify it to for example be more like spoken language and you learn expressions that you wouldn't necessarily learn from a school book

None of the participants volunteered to say that they sing the songs as well, but as I asked them about it directly, they all admitted to singing occasionally and noted that it is a good way to practice pronunciation.

Similarly to listening to music, another popular activity among the participants is watching movies and TV series (includes all forms of streaming services such as Netflix) in English, as could be anticipated. The majority of the questionnaire participants (92 participants, 78.6) name it among their top three EE activities, and the interviewees agree on its benefits as well. Adam and Chris state that using English subtitles instead of Finnish ones helps with learning. Here is what Chris had to say on the topic:

Chris: I feel that English can be learned from Netflix put on English subtitles that just some English series and English subtitles so if you want to read you have to read English and if you don't want to read you listen to English so at least some people learn from it very well

Whereas Chris does not elaborate on what type of learning occurs when watching TV with English subtitles, Adam emphasises the effect of using English subtitles to learn new words.

Adam: then if a new word comes across some peculiar words then you rewind and look how it's translated and realise that huh I have never heard that you can say that same thing that way too so that's how at least personally I have learned

Me: so you listen attentively and try to spot those words

Adam: yeah in a way that if there's a funny or a seemingly weird word you spot them easily

Adam adds that peer pressure also plays a part in this instance of English learning, as when they have arranged movie nights with friends there is a pressure to watch the films without subtitles on the basis of group mentality that "come on, we all know this stuff". Ben, too, says he usually refrains from having subtitles: "I watch a lot of movies on Netflix and don't necessarily always use any subtitles".

Encouragingly, the participants do actually talk English with their friends and in their hobbies. A mutual theme with Adam and Chris was using English at sports practice when interacting with their teammates and coaches. Chris plays American football and his coaches are all American. He explains that he turns into speaking “Brooklyn street talk” with the coaches and learns expressions that he can’t really use anywhere else, but uses them in that particular setting, speaking with teammates and coaches. Moreover, Chris says that overall they speak a lot of English in practise, because the coaches (and some teammates) do not know Finnish. In other words, English is spoken for the sake of politeness as well, so no one feels left out. Adam has similar experiences to Chris and mentions speaking English in practice with teammates and coaches of foreign backgrounds. Adam also mentions staying in touch with an Indian friend, a law student who was accommodated by Adam’s relatives in Finland, so they catch up in English approximately a couple times a month, although in this case the communication happens with the help of technology. Ben, too, uses English frequently when talking to a friend.

Ben: well my best friend speaks only English with his dad at home

Me: yeah

Ben: and that has brought it to our everyday talk that we use many English expressions in our discussions and anyway our topics are pretty broad which leads to English popping up quite much here and there in between if for example you are explaining a thing that is not happening in Finland then it’s easier to express somehow in English so English is present quite much when we talk and also when gaming I think there’s surely some English use there too

Me: yeah

Ben: but probably 90 percent in Finnish anyway

Me: so in situations when whichever comes first the Finnish or English expression you use that

Ben: That's right

Interestingly, Ben was the only one of the three to mention code-switching, although I am certain that the others do that as well and don't even notice. I feel confident claiming this because they all are competent in their use of English and they did it during the interviews as well. All interview participants hold speaking English with other people in high regard in terms of its usefulness for language development. Adam states that having been exposed to situations, in which the only mutual language is English, from a very young age, he has learned to use English bravely.

Lastly, I discuss the interviewees' use of social media and online news sites, and their effects on their learning of English. Like youth in general (74.4 % of the survey participants), the interviewed students use many social media in English. Especially Chris gives much of credit in regard the broadening of his vocabulary to a form of social media, reddit forums. When I asked him, what activity he thinks is most useful for informal English learning, he said "I guess reddit because there are so many threads [topics/columns] and if you read the comments basically everything is in English so there are always new words you learn and your vocabulary improves". He admits to spending a lot of time on reddit and even browses it at school if he is bored. Moreover, Chris spends considerable time watching videos on Youtube daily as well. All that content is in English, which helps with learning to understand spoken language and again vocabulary, since there are almost never any subtitles. For Ben, Youtube is the single most time consuming EE activity of all. He spends at least two hours a day watching Youtube videos, often much longer too. Ben also follows celebrity (music) news online, which are mostly in English or at least he prefers to read them in English, especially as he feels they

seem to become translated into Finnish really slowly if at all. In a similar fashion, Adam follows international football news from websites in English to keep informed, but also informally learns reading comprehension and trains his vocabulary at the same time. There is no questioning that reading news articles and using social media in English are useful pastime activities.

Much the same skills are presented by the interviewees as resulting from other EE activities as from video games. The improvement of vocabulary is again the most obvious and easiest to state. Vocabulary seems to increase by engaging in any EE activity whatsoever. Conversing with other people, using Youtube and listening to music develop listening comprehension and pronunciation in particular. According to the analysis, reading news and discussion forums naturally enhances a person's reading comprehension skills.

4.2.4 Extramural English vs. school English

In this section, I go through the interviewees' comparisons of out-of-school English and school English. First, I would like to raise how much the interviewees estimate having learned from informal settings compared to school overall. Chris states, "I probably learn more in free time than at school at the moment earlier like at school I learned much better". Due to his background of English schooling, upper secondary school English is just repetition for him. Therefore, he naturally feels he learns more relevant things outside of school. Ben feels the same way, claiming, "I'd say at least two thirds comes from the internet, music and games". It is of course impossible to determine accurately how much is learned from where, but such a strong feeling speaks for itself. Adam did not give a downright answer to this question, but I think he credits both venues of learning quite equally. Like Chris and Ben, Adam also feels that one learns somewhat different skills

from informal settings and formal teaching. Based on the interviews, there is clearly a strong consensus of EE activities being highly beneficial to English development, which is line with previous research.

The interviewees raise learning of grammar as the best part of school English. With English being a part of their everyday lives in various modes, the benefits of school English lean towards the structural learning of the language. Ben thinks like this, which can be seen from this excerpt.

- Ben: I'd say that grammar is the most useful side of school English because it has its uses when writing or when you are having a conversation of a high level grammar comes in handy
- Me: Yes
- Ben: And that you can apply it
- Me: *approval*
- Ben: and you learn quite a lot of vocabulary from school books too words that you don't find in games some specific vocabulary and then again from games and music and internet [you learn] the application and spoken language and other kind of vocabulary and you see how the communication happens which you don't think about at school that when you see people who speak [English] as a mother tongue use it and discuss things when you listen to it you learn how conversation is made

Grammar and vocabulary, of course, are among the skills that one ideally learns at school. What Ben is saying here is that, whereas both settings teach vocabulary, they differ in nature. According to him, informal settings give more instances of spoken language and thus teach application of language in spoken contexts better than school English. Ben considers the use of English in actual conversation and studying native speaker

conversations very beneficial for learning interaction, but school English has its upsides as well. One of those upsides, according to Ben, is good quality of schoolbooks these days.

Ben: Now I have noticed that as the new national core curriculum came some of the new books are very up to date compared to earlier books the topics are much more interesting and some even like editorialised for example many environmental problems and money use and even some music things or big news from a year back

Me: yeah okay

Ben: sometimes you read a book and be like this just happened how can it be in the book already

Because of the renewal of the National core curriculum in 2015, a new set of schoolbooks have been made, which increases their authenticity and topicality in the short term. In a few years' time though, it might again be a challenge for the teachers to come up with interesting and up to date material.

However, there is an evident gap between informal English and school English. The interviewees point out that where English used at school is somewhat restricted, i.e. set themes and obligatory grammatical correctness, using English outside classrooms is often far more open to variation. Of course, there are formal EE settings, such as news and documentaries, which provide models of carefully constructed language use. However, the interviewees are eager to emphasise the freer forms of language use in extramural settings. When asked to compare school English and EE, Ben feels that you learn characteristics of spoken language much more from extramural settings than school.

Ben: I would say that school English is at times like standard [literary] English and the like you don't necessarily hear used in normal spoken language

if you watch Youtube videos rarely you come
across the same phrases you find in English
[school]books

Furthermore, when speaking English with friends or in other situations, language can be used more freely, which Adam creditably points out.

Adam: yeah and for example if you compare it [school
English] to football practice it doesn't matter
what you say as long as you say it so you get
understood

no one even pays attention to we can laugh in a
friendly way if someone's speech is all over the
place and we barely make sense of it but
otherwise it's much more open and relaxed and
then you're not afraid of making mistakes

4.2.5 Attitudes towards English

In this chapter, I examine the attitudes of the interviewees towards English as a language. One aspect of these attitudes is the concept of speaking courage, i.e. to use English confidently and not be afraid of making mistakes. Like I said in the introduction, a common phrase heard from a Finnish person's mouth is "I understand English but I am afraid to use it". Therefore, I wish to explore, whether my informants also share or notice this notion. By attitudes I also mean their relationship with English. Do they like it? Do they feel they need it? What is their motivation to study English? These questions will be discussed in the following passages.

Adam says that he thinks the atmosphere at schools should be a bit more relaxed in terms of pointing out mistakes. He feels that this is an issue. "I claim that errors are corrected and students are kind of struck down straight away, and so you get the feeling that you might not dare say anything next time around." While understanding the institutional

nature of school and what formal language instruction tries to accomplish, he feels that a cosier environment that would allow and even encourage making mistakes would be better for students who make more errors than the rest. Adam concludes this thought with the notion that it might even lead to the students using English more bravely in other situations too. Ben too has experiences stressful situations from English classrooms, but thinks it is more like challenging oneself to perform rather than outright fear. Of course, it is a little frightening to read aloud for the whole class, for instance. On the other hand, Chris has different experiences from the English classrooms.

- Chris: I feel that nobody reacts to it [making mistakes] as everyone's at the same level so it doesn't matter
- Me: yeah mhm
- Chris: so if someone fails then it's just a wrong answer so I don't think regarding English anyone has any fear of answering wrong
- Me: well that's good and the fact is that everyone makes mistakes
- Chris: everyone studies and everyone makes mistakes

The problem with speaking courage is not restricted to school only. On the contrary, I think it represents itself much more in extramural situations. My claim of Finns often being hesitant to use English in everyday situations, because they feel their competence is lacking, gets some backing from the interviewees.

- Chris: I understand Estonian one hundred percent but I can't speak a word of it or I can some words but nonetheless I have no courage to speak it despite understanding all of it
- Me: do you know anyone who'd have this situation with English
- Chris: well my girlfriend understands English well but she doesn't dare speak it and when I make her talk she cannot cope
- Me: okay how common you think that type of attitude is

Chris: well in my circle of friends there are three so I don't know

Adam: yeah well a couple friends also come with foreign backgrounds so they have a bit of an accent but then I don't know whether they're ashamed of it or afraid that that's gonna make them sound funny or afraid of making mistakes

they do have good competence from what I've heard as I'm close to them but then they just don't dare or can't be bothered to use English whatever the reasons

All three interviewees emphasise that be it any situation, when conversing in English, all that really matters is that you get the message across. However, it would seem that there are still challenges that teachers need to face to make their classrooms places where students can feel confident about their abilities and not be afraid of making mistakes.

Having discussed the issue of making mistakes, I now turn my attention to the interviewees' attitudes towards English as a language: what is their motivation to study English, and why? All three participants admit to having a good motivation to study English. Chris thinks English is "a pleasant language", but does not like studying other languages much. The real reason behind the motivation to study just English is thus something else than just enjoying languages in general. Therefore, he explains, "English is an international language and everybody knows it". "Seeing how much English is out there adds to my motivation." Chris thinks that knowing English is a necessity, but he also highlights the comfortable feelings he gets when he uses English and it brings back good memories of Britain. He reasons the necessity of knowing English with its importance in working life and future studies. Consequently, English is very important for Chris in many ways. Adam also underlines the importance of English as a language of global business. Ben says he would like to learn English as broadly as possible and would likely enjoy living or studying abroad in the future. Such practical reasons to

acquire a good level of English naturally add to the motivation of studying it. And of course they are right in their opinions about English being very important in the job market. I too would say that it is more of a necessity than an optional language for the emerging working generation.

5 Summary of findings and conclusions

I will now summarise my main findings and then draw my conclusions based on them. This study shows that the sample group in question spends considerable time engaging in extramural English activities. There were no participants, who do not use English or be exposed English input in their free time at all. As video games are concerned, the majority of the participants (n=68, 58.1 %) imply that they play video games in English in their free time regularly, if not necessarily for a long time on a daily basis. Only few count video games among their most frequent EE activities, and it seems that playing video games is still a male dominated hobby. Regarding devices used for gaming in the current Finnish context, quite expectedly phones are used the most, in terms of reported use of phone as a gaming device / the amount of participants. In contrast to playing video games prevailing to be a male-dominated pastime activity, girls tend to use phones for gaming more than boys. On the other hand, those participants, who report playing video games significantly more, report using mainly computers and gaming consoles for gaming.

Participants who play a lot of video games naturally give playing much credit regarding their perceived English learning. In addition, some casual gamers claim to have learned significantly from gaming, which speaks volumes in behalf of video gaming as a good medium for incidental language acquisition. However, language skills learned from video gaming and other EE activities are very similarly represented in my data. As could be expected, vocabulary comes out as the most commonly stated area of language, which

develops through EE activities. For instance, all three interviewees claim that playing video games has improved their vocabulary and that they have learned special theme words by gaming. The interviewees' accounts reveal that, in addition, phrases and expressions used in spoken language, which cannot always be applied to other contexts, can be learned from video games. Even though playing video games seems to help develop English skills on many fronts, I cannot claim its superiority over other EE activities based on this study.

According to the data, all areas of language are developed quite equally through engaging in EE activities. As a way of out-of-class English learning, the majority of participants of the survey hold watching TV and movies with English subtitles or completely without subtitles in highest regard. The interviewees sign off on this remark as well – even if they do not all watch TV much themselves, that is what many of their friends like to do. Close behind in the poll come actually speaking English with someone and reading. All activities, naturally, have their own uses in terms of bettering one's language skills. In the voluntary open questions of the questionnaire, most who wrote something speak highly of speaking English in actual conversation and think of it as the best way to acquire English. Consequently, many participants feel that interaction with other people, whether they are co-gamers or football teammates, is the best way to develop and uphold their English skills. It teaches one to interact in real life situations and to understand other speakers, regardless of their proficiency.

The interviewees strongly experience learning grammar to be one of the upsides of school English. Also good quality of recent schoolbooks gets praise. Generally speaking, the interviewees feel that there is a noticeable gap between English used at school and English used in EE activities. Whereas schools teach structure of language, topical themes and

formal language use, conversational skills and utterances of ‘real language use’ are acquired from free time activities. According to the interviewees, the atmosphere in classrooms is in their experience generally good in terms of allowing mistakes to be made, but there have been situations, which might discourage learning and using English.

A lot of time spent in EE activities naturally leads to plenty of English input. It is also only logical that people feel they have learned most from the things they do the most – if you listen to a lot of music you would feel you have learned much from it. Plentiful English input inevitably results in informal learning, which does nothing but help one to become a competent user of English. From that, we can conclude that the best way to acquire English informally is to use it actively. Being active is the key to informal learning as well. As attitudes towards English are concerned, I only need to quote Ben:

”Yeah I clearly think that being understood and getting the message across is the most important thing. Then you can act on it.”

6 Discussion

Some of the participants pointed out in the open-ended questions of the survey or during the interviews that it is quite often hard to specify what you have learned from which situation. This is definitely true. Unless there is a specific memory of a situation, from which you think learning has resulted, the task is difficult. I would call it borderline impossible to pinpoint from where a certain word has come into your vocabulary, for example. However, vocabulary improvement in particular seems to be the easiest to notice. The participants felt that they have learned words from all kinds of EE activities. For instance, video games teach thematic vocabulary and you learn phrases used in

spoken interaction from watching TV. I think this is why vocabulary is so strongly represented in the data, whereas development other indicators of language proficiency are harder to link to specific EE activities.

I must say that I am a little surprised that more people did not raise playing video games as having been instrumental in their English acquisition, as is the case in many other studies and that of my own. Then, did video games emerge as a superior activity in my data? No. Yet, I argue that the interactive nature of many video games, especially games which make you work with other players, is one of the most useful EE activities. Supporting the claims of earlier research, the participants of this study do stress the importance of speaking and using English actively in terms of effective informal learning of English. Therefore we can conclude that playing video games, due to their interactive nature, is a more useful activity than many others are.

6.1 Limitations of the study and reliability issues

As this is an intrinsic case study (see Stake 1995), the purpose of which was to only explore a phenomenon and not so much compare it to other works, making generalisations based on this study is futile. Even if I wanted to, the size of the sample and the fact that all the participants are from the same school make even national scaling of the results meaningless.

As I already mentioned in the methods chapter, the research setting was not a clinical one, which might affect the participants' answers and thus the reliability my results. First, the participants were sitting right next to each other when taking the survey. This could affect the reliability of the answers if the setting created situations, in which peer pressure could play a part. If your friend is sitting right next to you, you might be inclined to answer in

a way that does not truly reflect your own thoughts. I had, however, no permission to rearrange the seats, for example. Other than that, language classrooms are, in my estimation, rather suitable spaces to conduct surveys.

Furthermore, I did not use the best tools (such as SPSS) for the statistical analysis of the data gathered through the questionnaire. However, I used MS Excel to work with the survey data and to make the calculations, which I have presented in the study. I feel that, in this context, my methods have been sufficient, but there is a chance for human error to be present in the calculations.

6.2 Pedagogical implications and ideas for further research

Like Ellis (2010) said, combining theory and practice is easier said than done. In this case too, applying the results of this study to be used in language classrooms proves difficult. When asked whether and how the students' own interests could be better utilised in formal teaching, the students could only come up with suggestions "essay writing" and "some kind of project work". I cannot blame them, since I have not been able to come to any other conclusion myself.

Being afraid of making mistakes, not trusting your abilities lead to not trying at all. If your failed efforts are disapproved of, you might not want to try again. That in turn leads to no learning. I would say that the root of this problem, despite all improvements made towards increasing emphasis on practicing oral skills and speaking English in class, lies at schools. If the atmosphere is hostile when a mistake is made, it does nothing but discourage students to try. Trial and error, however, is the cornerstone of all learning. Furthermore, it is the nature of naturally occurring spoken language to be full of errors in the first place. Therefore it is pivotal, in my opinion, that teachers make every effort in

creating a friendly environment for learning that encourages students to try, fail and succeed.

If not purely useful from a pedagogical point of view, it would be very interesting to see a large-scale study on informal English learning conducted in Finland. From the point of view of an English teacher, any applications of utilising informal learning in classrooms would be welcome. Such applications would be specifically useful when trying to make school English relevant and interesting for the most advanced students as well. Chris mentioned school English being child's play to him. This obviously attributes to his background of English schooling and having lived in Britain, but he is by no means alone passing school English with flying colours. People like Chris just cruise through their English classes without putting in any effort and they do not consider school English relevant for them.

Yes, the level of English in Finland is generally great, and only increased by the likes of Chris, but still realising and utilising the potential in informal learning is a chance to improve English instruction in Finland even further, if studied more. Consequently, I am strongly in favour of more research to be done on the topic, especially in Finland.

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8 Appendices

A The questionnaire form

Note: It was not possible to portray the questionnaire form here exactly as it was in printed form. As a result, what in the multiple choice questions of the original version were squares are now smaller circles. It was easier in the actual questionnaire form for the students to mark their answers.

Kyselylomake

Tämä kyselytutkimus käsittelee englanninkielisiä vapaa-ajan aktiviteetteja ja videopelien pelaamista englannin kielellä sekä niiden vaikutuksia englannin oppimiseen, opiskeluun ja kieleen suhtautumiseen. Tässä kyselyssä videopeleillä tarkoitetaan kaikkia tietokoneella (PC, Mac), pelikonsolilla (PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo Wii, käsikonsolit), tabletilla tai älypuhelimilla pelattavia pelejä ja myös kaikkia muita elektronisia pelejä, kuten internetsivustoilla (Facebookissa) pelattavia pelejä.

Tutkimuksen vastaukset käsitellään täysin nimettömiä, eikä niitä luovuteta kenenkään muun kuin tutkijan käyttöön. Jos sinulla on tutkimuksesta tai kyselylomakkeesta jotain kysyttävää, ota tutkijaan yhteyttä sähköpostilla.

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Kyselyn lopussa on mahdollisuus ilmoittautua haastateltavaksi videopelaamiseen ja englannin oppimiseen liittyen hieman syvällisemmin, mitä varten pyydän siellä erikseen yhteystietoja. Vastaajien nimiä tai yhteystietoja ei tässäkään yhteydessä julkaista missään muodossa.

Vastaa monivalintakysymyksiin rastittamalla itsellesi sopivin vaihtoehto. Jos on tarkoitus valita useampi kuin yksi vaihtoehto, se on mainittu kysymyksen yhteydessä.

Taustatietoja

Sukupuoli

- ☐ Nainen
- ☐ Mies
- ☐ Muu / En halua ilmoittaa

Ikä: _____

Oletko asunut maassa, jossa englantia puhutaan äidinkielenä tai jossa olet käyttänyt pääosin englantia?

- ☐ En
- ☐ Kyllä,

Missä? _____

Kuinka pitkään olet asunut tai ollut opiskelijavaihdossa englanninkielisessä maassa tai maassa, jossa olet pääosin käyttänyt englantia?

- ☐ 0–3 kuukautta
- ☐ Alle vuoden
- ☐ Yli vuoden
- ☐ Useita vuosia

Kysymykset 1-10: Videopelaaminen ja englannin oppiminen.

1. Arvioi, kuinka kauan käytät keskimäärin aikaa videopelien pelaamiseen **päivässä**.

- ☐ En yhtään
- ☐ Joitain minuutteja
- ☐ Alle puoli tuntia
- ☐ Alle tunnin
- ☐ 1-2 tuntia
- ☐ Useamman tunnin

2. Kuinka suuri osa pelaamistasi videopeleistä on kokonaan tai suurimmaksi osaksi englannin kielellä?

- Kaikki tai lähes kaikki
- Suurin osa
- Noin puolet tai alle puolet
- Vain osa

3. Millaisia pelejä pääosin pelaat? **Valitse maksimissaan kolme!**

- Selainpelejä (Facebook-pelit yms.)
- Massiivimoninpelejä (World of Warcraft, Tamriel Unlimited, ...)
- Urheilupelejä
- Auto- ja simulaattoripelejä
- Roolipelejä (Diablo, Dragon Age, Final Fantasy, Fallout, ...)
- Strategiapelejä (Starcraft II, Civilization, ...)
- Räiskintäpelejä (Call of Duty, Battlefield, Destiny, ...)
- Seikkailupelejä (The Legend of Zelda)
- Tasohyppelypelejä (Super Mario, Mirror's Edge, ...)
- Rakentelu- ja elämsimulaatiopelejä (The Sims, Minecraft, Tropic, ...)
- Musiikkipelit (Guitar Hero, Rock Band, Singstar, ...)
- En osaa luokitella/muita

(listaa pelien nimiä)

4. Millä laitteilla pelaat? **Voit valita useita.**

- Tietokoneella (PC, Mac)
- Pelikonsolilla (PlayStation, Xbox, Wii, Sega, ...)
- Käsikonsolilla (PS Vita, Nintendo 3DS, ...)
- Älypuhelimella tai tabletilla
- Jollain muulla, millä:

5. Minkä ikäisenä aloitit (edes osittain) englanninkielisten videopelien pelaamisen?

- ☐ Alle kouluikäisenä
- ☐ 7–12 -vuotiaana
- ☐ 13–16 -vuotiaana
- ☐ Myöhemmin kuin 16-vuotiaana
- ☐ En osaa sanoa

6. Kuinka paljon koet englanninkielisten videopelien pelaamisen kehittäneen englannin kielen taitojasi?

- ☐ Hyvin paljon
- ☐ Melko paljon
- ☐ Jonkin verran
- ☐ Vähän tai ei lainkaan
- ☐ En osaa sanoa

7. Mitä seuraavista englannin kielitaidon osa-alueista englanninkielisten videopelien pelaaminen on mielestäsi kehittänyt? **Voit valita useita vaihtoehtoja.**

- ☐ Sanasto
- ☐ Kielioppi
- ☐ Kuullun ymmärtäminen
- ☐ Luetun ymmärtäminen
- ☐ Puhuminen
- ☐ Kirjoittaminen
- ☐ Kulttuurintuntemus
- ☐ Puherohkeus
- ☐ En osaa sanoa

8. Kuvaile, miten pelaaminen on vaikuttanut kielitaitoosi. Millaisia asioita olet oppinut?

9. Onko videopelaaminen englanniksi vaikuttanut opiskelumotivaatioosi englannin kieltä kohtaan?

- ☐ Kyllä, kasvattanut paljon
- ☐ Kyllä, kasvattanut jonkin verran
- ☐ Kyllä, vähentänyt jonkin verran
- ☐ Kyllä, vähentänyt paljon
- ☐ Ei ole vaikuttanut
- ☐ En osaa sanoa

10. Onko videopelaaminen englanniksi muuttanut suhtautumistasi englannin kieltä kohtaan?

- ☐ Kyllä, merkittävästi
- ☐ Kyllä, jonkin verran
- ☐ Ei juurikaan
- ☐ Ei
- ☐ En osaa sanoa

Jos vastasit kyllä,

miten? _____

Kysymykset 11-15 : Muut englanninkieliset aktiviteetit.

11. Kuinka paljon aikaa käytät keskimäärin **päivässä pelaamisen lisäksi muihin** englanninkielisiin aktiviteetteihin, kuten lukemiseen, uutisten seuraamiseen, sosiaaliseen mediaan, TV:n ja elokuvien katseluun, musiikin kuunteluun yms.? Vastaa, vaikka et pelaisi ollenkaan.

- ☐ En yhtään
- ☐ Joitain minuutteja
- ☐ Alle puoli tuntia
- ☐ Alle tunnin
- ☐ 1-2 tuntia
- ☐ Useamman tunnin

12. Missä yhteyksissä käytät englannin kieltä keskimäärin eniten vapaa-ajallasi? **Valitse maksimissaan kolme.**

- ☐ Videopelaaminen
- ☐ Lukeminen (kirjat, uutiset, blogit, ...)
- ☐ TV:n katselu
- ☐ Elokuvat
- ☐ Sosiaalinen media
- ☐ Musiikin kuuntelu
- ☐ Englanniksi keskustelu kaverin kanssa
- ☐ Muu, mikä?

- ☐ En käytä englantia vapaa-ajallani

13. Mitkä seuraavista vapaa-ajan aktiviteeteista koet hyödyllisimmiksi englannin kielitaidon kehittymisen kannalta? **Valitse maksimissaan kolme.**

- ☐ Videopelaaminen
- ☐ Lukeminen (kirjat, uutiset, blogit, ...)
- ☐ Musiikin kuunteleminen
- ☐ Englanninkielisten TV-ohjelmien, -sarjojen ja elokuvien katsominen
- ☐ Englannin puhuminen kaverin/tutun kanssa
- ☐ Sosiaalisen median käyttö
- ☐ Joku muu, mikä

-
- ☐ En mitään mainituista aktiviteeteista

Miksi? _____

14. Mitä kielen osa-alueita englanninkieliset vapaa-ajan aktiviteetit ovat mielestäsi kehittäneet?

- ☐ Sanasto
- ☐ Kielioppi
- ☐ Kuullun ymmärtäminen
- ☐ Luetun ymmärtäminen
- ☐ Puhuminen
- ☐ Kirjoittaminen
- ☐ Kulttuurintuntemus
- ☐ Puherohkeus
- ☐ En osaa sanoa

15. Sana vapaa. Haluatko mainita jotain, mikä erityisesti videopelaamisessa on hyvää englannin oppimisen kannalta? Onko jokin muu tietty aktiviteetti ollut sinulle erityisen hyödyllinen englannin kielen oppimista ajatellen?

Kyselyn lisäksi haastattelen muutamia henkilöitä, jolloin keskustellaan yksityiskohtaisemmin videopelaamisen vaikutuksista englannin oppimiseen ja asennoitumisesta kieltenopiskeluun ja vieraan kielen käyttöön tosielämässä. **Jos pelaat videopelejä ja sinua saa haastatella**, kirjoita alle nimesi ja sähköpostiosoitteesi ja/tai puhelinnumerosi, jotta voin olla sinuun yhteydessä haastatteluun liittyen.

Nimi: _____

Sähköposti: _____

Puhelinnumero: _____

Kiitos paljon vastauksistasi!

B Interview questions

Haastattelurunko

1. Kuvaile omin sanoin videopelitottumuksiasi.
 - a. Minkälaisia videopelejä pelaat?
 - b. Millä laitteilla pelaat?
 - c. Kuinka suuri osa pelaamistasi peleistä on englanniksi?
 - d. Kuinka usein pelaat videopelejä?
 - e. Kuinka kauan arvioisit pelaavasi keskimäärin päivittäin tai viikossa?
2. Miten englannin kieli esiintyy peleissä?
 - a. Missä muodoissa englantia esiintyy peleissä?
 - b. Miten itse käytät englannin kieltä pelatessasi?
 - c. Miten kommunikoit pelin sisällä tai muiden pelaajien kanssa?
3. Miten koet englanninkielisten videopelien pelaamisen vaikuttaneen sinun englannin kielen oppimiseen?
 - a. Mitä kielitaidon osa-alueita englanninkielisten videopelien pelaaminen on kehittänyt?
 - b. Osaatko antaa konkreettisia esimerkkejä?
4. Videopelaamisen lisäksi missä muissa aktiviteeteissa käytät englantia vapaa-ajallasi?
 - a. Mihin aktiviteetteihin käytät eniten aikaa? Kuinka paljon?
 - b. Vertaile videopelaamisesta ja muista vapaa-ajan aktiviteeteista oppimiasi englannin kielen taitoja.
 - c. Mitkä aktiviteetit koet kaikkein hyödyllisimmiksi englannin kielitaidon kehittymisen kannalta? Miksi?
5. Mitä luulet, että yleisesti ajatellaan virheiden tekemisestä vieraalla kielellä puhuttaessa?
 - a. Koulussa
 - b. Vapaa-ajalla
 - c. Miten rohkeasti itse käytät englantia tai muita vieraita kieliä?

6. Miten vertaisit koulussa opittua englantia siihen, mitä olet oppinut muualta?
 - a. Eroavatko ne jotenkin toisistaan?
 - b. Jos mielestäsi eroavat, mitä hyötyjä koet olevan “kouluenglannilla” ja koulun ulkopuolella opitulla englannilla?

7. Millainen on motivaatiosi englannin ja muiden kielten opiskeluun?
 - a. Ovatko englanninkieliset vapaa-ajan aktiviteetit jotenkin vaikuttaneet opiskelumotivaatioosi? Miten?

8. Miten kuvailisit suhtautumistasi englannin kieleen?
 - a. Miten tärkeänä koet englannin osaamisen itsellesi?
 - b. Onko sinulla tavoitteita englannin kielen osaamiseen liittyen? Millaiseksi englannin käyttäjäksi haluaisit kehittyä?
 - c. Millainen on ollut englanninkielisten videopelien pelaamisen rooli suhtautumisesi muodostumisessa?

9. Voita isiinko oppilaiden mielenkiinnon kohteita hyödyntää paremmin englannin opetuksessa? Miten?

10. Olisiko sinulla kysyttävää tai muuta lisättävää haastatteluun liittyen?